

HISTORY OF MEMPHIS-WORLD WAR I AVIATION  
INTERVIEWS WITH MR. LOUIS CARRUTHERS

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD  
TRANSCRIBER - BETTY WILLIAMS  
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE  
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JUNE 6, 1986

FEBRUARY 4, 1987

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BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

TRANSCRIBED: BETTY WILLIAMS

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PLACE

Memphis, TN

DATE

June 6, 1986

Louis Larrabee

(INTERVIEWEE)

Charles W. Crawford

(For the Mississippi Valley Archives  
of the John Willard Brister Library  
of Memphis State University)



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THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "HISTORY OF MEMPHIS-WORLD WAR I AVIATION." THE DATE IS JUNE 6, 1986. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. LOUIS CARRUTHERS. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS. INTERVIEW I.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Carruthers, if we may, I'd like to start early today with your family background, a little bit about your family, your parents and their life in Memphis, then the time and place you were born and what you remember about Memphis in the earliest times. What can you tell us about your parents?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, my earliest recollection goes back to the time that we moved into a new home at Evergreen and Galloway. At that time my father was a shoe manufacturer here in Memphis and had a very fine little factory and had a building here on Main Street just next door to where Goldsmith's is. I can recall going down there and going up and down on the elevator and seeing crates and boxes of shoes that were going to be shipped out. That impressed me of being a fine business for one to be into, because all people of modern times, it seemed to me, needed shoes. He prospered at that business until one of his partners left him and he moved from that location to a new building down on





Second and Union Avenue or between Union and Monroe which is the site of the present National Bank of Commerce garage. There he was called the Johnson, Carruthers and Rand Shoe Company.

DR. CRAWFORD: Still producing shoes?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Still making shoes. [They were] mostly distributed in the Mid-South area by salesmen. I can remember the long and narrow trunks with a lot of trays in them that they would put one shoe--either a left or a right in. Each salesman got a division of it. And these trays were put down into the trunk which was about three feet high. They would take that in their cars or on a train depending which way they were going to work the territory and show it to the merchants out in the country.

At that time with a large number of planters and farms in the area, each one would have a nice commissary in which they sold almost everything that the tenants on the place could use. That was a big business for a long, long time.

Then I recall that Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rand decided that they wanted to enlarge the business. They severed their connection with the firm and went to St. Louis to form the Johnson, Carruthers, Johnson, Robertson Rand Shoe Company which became a very very successful company and eventually into the International Shoe Company. It was going so good up there that they persuaded Father to close his business here and go to St. Louis and open up a manufacturing plant there.





DR. CRAWFORD: When was that, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I think it was in the 1910s or 1912s. I remember we lived in this nice home on Evergreen and that I believe my family owned a 1910 Cadillac and a Ford. We loaded up the trucks with the household furniture and they left us to go down to the wharf and we got in the cars finally and drove downtown to the river front and drove right on to the Robert E. Lee.

DR. CRAWFORD: The steamboat?

MR. CARRUTHERS: The steamboat. Now we went to St. Louis and it took us three days.

DR. CRAWFORD: At that time there was no bridge for automobiles?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, not to my knowledge there wasn't.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you were about fifteen, I believe.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I was fifteen or sixteen years old.

DR. CRAWFORD: When were you born, sir and where?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I was born in 1897 and I was born on Merriwether Street here in Memphis.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was it March 26th?

MR. CARRUTHERS: March 26th 1897.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you would have been about fifteen years old when you went to St. Louis?

What do you remember about the trip up there on the Robert E. Lee?

MR. CARRUTHERS: It was a very interesting trip. I never had the pleasure of a state room on a





boat and the nice easy-going life that it was. I was impressed with it. When we got to St. Louis, we drove off of it. My Father met us with another car and took us out to Westminster Drive or Street and showed us where he had rented a house for us. We moved our things in and the furniture came and it was all moved in and we stayed at that location probably a year. Then we decided to buy a house further east of St. Louis right near Union and Boulevard I believe, near University City. We moved into the new home and were enjoying life. I went to a high school there called Soldan.

DR. CRAWFORD:           What was it called, sir?

MR CARRITHERS:       Soldan, S-O-L-D-A-N. A very nice school and a very select neighborhood and I met a number of boys that I liked and I was inducted into some high school fraternity and I have forgotten what it was. I remember one man particularly by the name of Whittenberg that was one of my classmates and one of my fraternity brothers and an old St. Louisian. He saw that we met fine people in the town and we got to enjoy it very much.

Then all of a sudden the depression of that year which I think was 1914 hit the leather market and business went to pot and my Father had a terrible time trying to keep in business and finally had to take bankruptcy and folded up and came back to Memphis.



DR. CRAWFORD: That was the depression in 1914?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I think it was--yes. To the best of my knowledge we came back about 1915 or 1916 and we moved into a home that he had been having built for the market over on North Bellevue very close to Poplar Avenue--Poplar and Madison. Then we lived there for three or four years. I believe the imminence of the war which had started in 1914 became more apparent as I came up and was going to school. I began to get an interest in aviation. We had this picture up here that depicts one of the Curtis planes that was here in Memphis at the old driving park out in North Memphis.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that on Jackson, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, it was on Third Street. It was just for . . . What were the two-wheel things that they drove in races?

DR. CRAWFORD: Sulky?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Maybe it was a sulky. I played hooky from school and I went out there to see if I could get a job hauling gasoline to the airplanes and putting it in and eventually getting to ride. Bless pat after a week and I got the go ahead and I took a ride in a Curtis around the field. They had it circling around.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember who flew it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know. It was one of the Curtis. I don't know which one. I think it might have been Glen and then it might not.





DR. CRAWFORD: And that was shortly before World War I?

MR. CARRUTHERS Well, it was shortly before we got into the war. I think the war started in 1914 in Europe.

DR. CRAWFORD: Seventeen in U.S. but '14 in Europe.

We declared war in April '17 I think.

It was between those times?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, it was that time till the war was declared. I went to Castle Heights School. I went to Central High for one year I believe and then went on to Castle Heights at Lebanon, Tennessee. Then I graduated and went to Vanderbilt for almost one year. I was having such a good time I couldn't make the grades to stay, so I switched over to Sewanee. I was in Sewanee in early '16 and '17. At that time my brother was a major in the National Guard here.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was his name, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Ewing Carruthers. He had been in the shoe business with my father after we moved back from St. Louis. We were just the opposite that time. We had a business there on Second Street across from Monroe which is now the NBC bank. He telephoned me one evening and said that he had met a major in the Signal Corps of the U.S. Army which had moved into Memphis with some Canadian planes--the old Canuk jobs--really Curtiss JN-4D's I think.

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DR. CRAWFORD:           Curtiss JN-4D. Was that the one they called the "Jenny"?

MR. CARRUTHERS:        Uh-huh. They had about ten planes here, and about five instructors for instructing and using them. He phoned me that they were taking enlistees for the service and that if I wanted to get in to come on down and see if he could help me get in because he knew the officers very well.

I remember I persuaded three of my buddies there to come with me. I think there are some pictures in there of us coming down. We arrived on a Saturday night and he took us out on Sunday morning. We had a very cordial meeting with the major and his doctor out there. I remember it was underneath the grandstand where the offices were. He gave us an application to fill out and we filled out names and addresses and age and all of that. Then he took us and asked us a few questions about our health and then signed it and he said that you sign it here. And we were in! So I was a First Sergeant in Signal Corps in the United States Army.

From that time I suppose we trained for four to six months out there. Then we had orders to move to Chicago.

DR. CRAWFORD:           How much training did you undergo? What did you do while you were out there?

MR. CARRUTHERS:        I took dual lessons here. I did not get to solo here, but I did take dual lessons and I remember we had a very slim tall instructor--maybe his name will come back to me. He later held the high altitude



record of that time. He sort of taught us this: "Now if you come around this side of the field, you will see that smoke-stack down there. When you get your nose on the smokestack and as you fly along you keep the nose on it so you get to the ground. You'll be then coasting in. When you get in that groove then you will just automatically land." We believed that you know that there was a groove there. He taught us how to make landings and we were all set to solo when we got orders to move to Ashburn right out of Chicago.

We didn't fly the planes up there then. We put all the pieces on freight cars and sent them up to Ashburn.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you go by train?

MR. CARRUTHERS: We went up by train. I think I still have my original orders showing that and paying my fare. We got there and unloaded and put the planes together again and started flying around.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was Ashburn, Illinois?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Ashburn, Illinois.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was the field that you were training at here?

MR. CARRUTHERS: It was Driving Park.

DR. CRAWFORD: In north Memphis?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. I never did get any further than that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was the field long enough to be safe for planes at the time?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh, yes, it was for the Jennys. It was





just fine for the Jennys. I remember one day I went up with one of the flyers. He was one of the younger ones. He just did everything the old Jenny would do. And I got so sick when I got out that I went home. I stayed at home for nearly a week. My brother called me up, he said, "Listen, you joined the Army, boy, you can't do this." So I had to go back, but I had to get myself unafraid again.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you ever get sick later?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, I don't ever remember getting sick, after that. He put it through everything that old plane would do!

DR. CRAWFORD: All the acrobatic maneuvers that it would do?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, at that time which wasn't very much. But he did a couple of loops and tail spins and that sort of thing.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have seat belts then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh yes, we had seat belts, but no parachutes at all. After we flew around at Ashburn, I still had not soloed. We moved to Chanute Field which was at Rantoul, Illinois which was about 90 miles from Chicago.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Rantoul, near Champlaign, Illinois. We did get to fly down there.



DR. CRAWFORD: You soloed down at Rantoul and Chanute?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I soloed at Chanute later on. I soloed and where I earned my RMA--that's Reserve Military Aviators with rating by flying round trips around towns in the area and making some high altitude and tried a little formation flying and several other things that the instructors put us through to see if we could handle a plane and fly along with other planes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what date that was? When did you start training in Memphis?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I started training in late April.

DR. CRAWFORD: A good time of the year for it, wasn't it? Was it summer then when you were at Chanute?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, in the summertime. That was through June and July. I remember in August or September I was among the few that were ordered to a place in New York. What was that? Garden City, New York, where we waited our orders to go overseas.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, was that still 1917 or 1918?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, it was 1917. I remember having Thanksgiving dinner in Belfast on the trip over. I remember staying up most of the night watching for submarines which I never saw.

DR. CRAWFORD: The war was different in several ways--airplanes and submarines both.





MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, the submarines were the predominant thing because of course, that's what got us into the war.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you go over? Did you go over on a troop ship?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, on a troop ship--some freighter that was re-treated so that it would handle a lot of men.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember which one it was?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Lorraineia

DR. CRAWFORD: How did they ship your planes over?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know, those planes never did come to Europe. They stayed in the country here. When we got to Belfast and on down to Liverpool, we got out and had a couple of nights in London. I can remember one of the nights that the Zeppelins bombed London.

DR. CRAWFORD: The German Zeppelins bombed London when you were there?

MR. CARRUTHERS: We ran out of the little boarding house that we had gotten into to see them, you know. The first thing we saw were some bobbies. And they said, "You boys better get yourselves back inside. This is dangerous business!"

We said, "We can't do that, sir, we got to see those Zeps."

We could see flashlights going all around the sky. Some of them would catch one of the Zeps and then the little old



British plane would fly at it and try to shoot it down.

We didn't see any shot down.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, about how high would the Zeppelins fly?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know, but they were pretty darn high.

DR. CRAWFORD: You did see some of them?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, we could see them with their search lights on them. You could see the planes trying to reach them. I think the fact that they didn't do more was the height that they had was almost impossible for the planes to reach.

Then we took a boat across the Channel and got into some little place in France (I've forgotten now what the place was) LaHavre or somewhere. We got on some freight cars and started toward the interior. This was getting to be November or the late part of November.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of nineteen seventeen?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Nineteen seventeen. Issoudun, France, was the Third Aviation Training Center.

DR. CRAWFORD: Issoudun?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. It was a little bit of country town, but a lot of farmland that had been turned over to the Americans for the thing. We got busy building barracks, latrines, headquarters and things like that and some hangers. I stayed busy working at that sort of thing until early spring.





DR. CRAWFORD: Of 1918?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah, we didn't have any planes at all.

I was a cadet. I had gotten my orders to go over and gotten my orders and seen them in a magazine that I had been promoted to a first lieutenant, but I never got the actual orders.

DR. CRAWFORD: But you read it in the paper?

MR. CARRUTHERS: But I read it in the book. We would go to one commanding officer or wherever we hit and telling him about it, he said, "Well, where is your bars?"

So we wore our bars and belt and the next place we get so the old guy was tough he said, "Take them off! You're cadets!" We went on till we got to Issoudun and I still was a cadet. I stayed one until about February of 1918.

DR. CRAWFORD: Before the orders caught up?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Before the orders caught up with me.

Then when we were finished with the barracks and the hangers, we got some planes flown in by a Frenchman. These Frenchmen were all ex-army people who had been on the front some of them. They were pretty well cured of the war you might say. They liked that job of training. The first dual planes that we had in those days an airplane had a heavy rubber band or a lot of rubber bands put together and they wrapped them over the axle of the wheels and over the frame of the landing gear and when you hit, that was your resiliency, you see.

12-20-20

DR. CRAWFORD: No springs?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No springs at all--just that rubber stuff.

These Frenchmen had taken some of those rubber things and fixed the controls so that we didn't have a positive control. It was only these rubber bands. We would turn the thing around to go to the right and the plane would go to the left. We got sort of fed up with it after awhile. The reason for it was that the Frenchmen said, "You crazy Americans don't know what you are doing all the time."

So we finally went to Major Spaatz who later became a general of great note and told him what our trouble was. He said, "Well, can you boys fly those planes and teach our boys how to use them."

We said, "We had to learn d--- quick!" Here were 23 Nieuports that we were flying and coaching in--two-place machines.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know where they had been manufactured?

MR. CARRUTHERS: France. They were French Nieuports. We began to get more and more of them. The base enlarged itself where it had nine different fields all separate from the other fields. The first one you went to was landing and take-offs. At first you had these French machines that wouldn't get off the ground called Ruelachs.



DR. CRAWFORD: Ruelachs?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, because rotary motors all have a tendency to pull to the right and you had to conquer that by a rudder. You got in these Ruelachs which had rotary motors and if you didn't watch yourself you'd be turning around before you knew it. So we had to practice and practice in those Ruelachs and when we got through with that they turned us over to these Frenchman to give us some instructions. Then finally the major got to where we could do some of the flying and let the Frenchmen go. From that time on we started on a real program of giving lessons to the incoming boys and promoting them on through the other fields. The fields would be formation flying, aerobatics, altitude flying and gunnery with the cameras, formation flying--all those different stages that you were supposed to go through.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have guns on the Nieuports then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: We did on ones that had gun cameras. They would take pictures as you pulled the trigger.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of your marksmanship. How high was your altitude? How high would they go ?

MR. CARRUTHERS: We had some altitude flights. I think the best we could do was around 7500 feet. You get a little bit shy of breath and all of that when you get above that.





DR. CRAWFORD:           Oxygen would be short above that.

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Rotary motors would slow down in the high altitudes and lighter air.

DR. CRAWFORD:       Was that in the summer of 1918 sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Eighteen, yes. Then after we instructed the boys we had to set up a system of testing them. So many of the flyers became testers and as you graduated into dual flying when they soloed you and you had your solo trips then you came to this tester and he would take you through all these maneuvers to see if he thought you were thorough. Then he'd (laisser) let you go to the next stage.

I can remember a very close friend I had over there. His name was Swayne Latham. He is still living here. He had a brother that was in the artillery and he induced his brother to change from artillery to the air service. Frank had been coming up through the ranks and he came to me as being laisseries (French word). I tested him and I said, "Frank, you just can't fly these airplanes." He was the kind that like some folks driving an automobile would overdrive--too far on the right or too far on the left--he was jerky with his stick and that sort of thing. I said, "For your own good health, please go back and get your instruction all over." And he did. He got up to aerobatics and got in a tail spin and killed himself.



DR. CRAWFORD: Did Swayne Latham have a son?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is he still living?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, he's still living. His wife died a couple of weeks ago.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did the Nieuports compare with Jennys?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, they were smaller and more flyable in that you had to have a feel of the air and feel of the plane to perform with them. The old Jennys had enough wing span if you came in to land, you came in pretty smooth. It was just a question if you judged where the land was.

DR. CRAWFORD: The Nieuport was smaller?

MR. CARRUTHERS: The Nieuport was smaller and it would come in faster and you had to have just the right feel to it in relation to the ground to hit that ground and make a nice three point landing. You could land on a city lot if you knew how to handle the plane.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they land in a very short distance?

MR. CARRUTHERS: A very short distance, yes. As we kept on flying them and learning them we could sideslip into a field--just very easy.

DR. CRAWFORD: You mean you could fly over and slip to the side?

MR. CARRUTHERS: And let it slide in till you see you're on the side. It just kept enough for-





ward speed to have to get your nose up when you have to land.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you would steer it to the side.

What about the motors? How did they compare in the Jennys?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, they were very fine motors. It was the rotary motor and they accelerate much faster. One of the problems was that they didn't have carburetors on them. They sucked it in as they rotated.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now what kind of motor was this?

MR. CARRUTHERS: A rotary motor. The whole motor turned on an axis with the propeller fixed to it. Then there was sort of a hood over it. This is a Nieuport right here.(pointing to picture)

DR. CRAWFORD: You are standing by it. Is that you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Wearing your heavy coat and your lieutenant's bar.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I guess it might have been wintertime.

DR. CRAWFORD: You have your legs wrapped there.

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, this is the one under the picture.

That's a Spad there. That's an 8 cylinder motor there. This is to the right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, this is a very short plane, isn't it and you have your machine guns mounted.

MR. CARRUTHERS: All machine guns were mounted on the top.

DR. CRAWFORD: At that time. Did you have one or two machine guns?



MR. CARRUTHERS: Two machine guns on them.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were French manufactured I suppose?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. They were French. Now, this was or might have been taken when I was in gunnery school or it might have been taken while I was using a camera. I believe it was at gunnery school.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did you stay at Issoudun?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Issoudun? I got orders, I think, in July or August to go to Orly, France.

That's right outside of Paris.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where the airport is now?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. There I was assigned planes to fly out to the front to the air bases wherever they were. They would have bases where all the supplies and planes were kept. Then the squadrons would come in by motor truck or car and pick up the plane they were going to take out to the front.

I flew just every kind of plane that was made to one place or another.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kinds were available over there then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, there were several French planes-- the Breguet and the Salmson and the Spads and then we began to get some of the American Liberties.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you like them?



MR. CARRUTHERS: No, I didn't. They were smaller than the Nieuports.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was very small then, wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Uh-huh. There were bigger planes. They were two seaters. And gas tanks were between the front seat and the back seat. As it proved out later on, that was a h--- of a target for the Germans. If they couldn't hit you, they wanted to hit that tank. They had to later change that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did they move it when they changed?

MR. CARRUTHERS:? I don't know just where, but I remember that they either moved the passenger seat and put the tank in behind there.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you like the Spad?

MR. CARRUTHERS: When we got Spads I was crazy about them. They were stable, very rugged planes, inline motor and didn't have torque that pulls it to the side.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were getting away from the rotary engines then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. During June of '18 when the Germans made a drive for Paris there were some American squadrons that went out with some Nieuports. Some of them were the old style and some were called Nieuport '18. They were a little better plane than the others. They had what you call a monosoupape motor. That was, instead of having an accelerator that speeded up your motor, you had a select-





or. You would go on one cylinder Tat-Tat-Tat and three cylinder tat-tat-tat-and six cylinders and nine. And when you get that nine that baby would go out from under you. With no carburator, it pulled gas in under the hood. Sometimes a little faulty ignition would cause that to explode. Then on some of those Nieuports the diving took all the fabric off the wings. Eddie Rickenbacker and a few other squadrons were on the front with the Lafayette in June and gave the Germans a h--- of a battle. They were responsible for what turned out to be a break in the efforts of the Germans to Paris which was one of their high option deals to get.

The Americans then began to form around Paris in defense lines that were too powerful for them there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they still using Zeppelins then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, they were using a lot of blimps. The Zeppelins had disappeared so far as I know. I think I was in Paris once when a Zep attacked it, but it was very inconsequential but nobody paid a lot of attention to it.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were at pretty high altitude?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, they had a very high altitude and I think at that time a limited load and directing the load was not a proven method. They would drop them and just like on these Spads here in the middle there. General Mitchell was hell bent and bound that we were to win that war and fast! Underneath and just above where you sit



there's a rack. I don't know whether you can see it in that picture.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir, I think I can with my glasses.

MR. CARRUTHERS: See right there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir.

MR CARRUTHERS: Right under there we carried four bombs that size--eighty pounds.

DR. CRAWFORD: Four 80-pound bombs in the rack underneath the plane.

MR. CARRUTHERS: We had nothing more than a handgrip to let them go. You couldn't aim them. You just thought you were aiming them by the way you were flying. Here's something that is a propeller here has got a hole and they wire that to this.

DR. CRAWFORD: To the front of the bomb?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. It has got a thing that sticks in there in between the blades so that if you had to make a forced landing or anything it would not explode. So when you get a certain amount of altitude, you release it and it would let that clock turn, I think, a hundred times and then it would set the detonator.

DR. CRAWFORD: So it was safe while you were flying--or supposed to be anyway.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah. Billy Mitchell would declare that on a certain day there was going to be a bombing of Frankfort or maybe some of the big air bases that the Germans had. And to get a bomb on it and we were pursuit



pilots and not bombers it took to the air. We just simply overpowered them. We just had the predominance of bombers and photographic planes with everything in them. We flew our airplanes and dropped those bombs on those air bases and wrecked the h--- out of all their planes.

DR. CRAWFORD:           How many planes do you suppose you would have on a mission like that?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       No telling. It was just how good the judgment was in dropping the bombs and how the wind was and other things like that.

DR. CRAWFORD:           No bomb sights?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       No bomb sights and we were just novices at it. We had had no experience whatever and we never had a training field for dropping bombs. The altitude made a big difference. Then one day we get orders to strafe the lines of the trenches. The Germans were moving back so fast they would get into trucks or whatever to head back to Germany. We were to dive in and bomb them and strafe them with the guns and do everything we could to disorganize it you know.

DR. CRAWFORD:           Did you ever get any return fire when you were doing this?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Yes, we got some shrapnel and often they would shoot back at us.

DR. CRAWFORD:           Did you lose any planes that way?





MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know whether we did or not. My squadron didn't.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were strafing that time when you saw that large oil truck with people on it.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I went down on it and I dropped a bomb. I must have been a little bit too low or something, but when it hit this thing the gasoline exploded and my tail end went up like that (gesturing) and I almost hit the ground. I just did pull up in time to. . .

DR. CRAWFORD: You were close to the explosion? You were dropping the bomb very low then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you were moving slow enough evidently you were not going faster than the truck, were you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, I can't remember that, but I let it go at the right time to hit the truck and then the blast of the gas just lifted me up and it dern near got me!

DR. CRAWFORD: That pointed your nose down.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: You must have been very close to that truck.

MR. CARRUTHERS: We had to be close.

DR. CRAWFORD: In order to hit anything.



MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah. But I sneaked one of those bombs in my trunk when I came home.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I see that one over your door there.

MR. CARRUTHERS: It was loaded when I brought it home.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had it disarmed though when you got back I am sure.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of machine guns did you have on the plane?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, we started out with French guns on the Spads and then Remington came out with a gun. We got the Remington guns which were faster.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were 30 caliber, I guess?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, we had one 30 caliber and one 28 or something like that. We had one difficulty with them, the ammunition was bad. Instead of regulating itself and shooting between the swing of the prop, it cut into the wood of the prop.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they were supposed to shoot between the revolutions of the propeller when they were across.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Of course, they were designed that way. But the next bullet would catch up with it or something. It would shoot off one side of your prop, and you had to keep on shooting to get the other side off



else you would vibrate so that you would lose control. On two different planes I shot the whole prop off twice.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have enough prop left to pull you in?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh no, you were just spinning. You would just cut your motor and land somewhere wherever you can.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you were lucky they would land in a small space, weren't you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh yes. Of course, France was all farmland, mostly.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you did have to come down a couple of times?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh yes, I had two or three narrow escapes on it.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of a landing did you make? Where did you come down?

MR. CARRUTHERS: With the props shot off, do you mean?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Just the closest you could find!

DR. CRAWFORD: Because you didn't have much choice?

MR. CARRUTHERS: You didn't have any speed left cause your motor--you had to cut your motor off--

to keep that vibrations because there were always some that wouldn't shear off even and if you didn't you would be in trouble. You had to keep your speed up and your nose down





and a place to put it. Unfortunately, as far as I can remember all the boys got in somewhere.

DR. CRAWFORD:           And you came down on the French side of the lines in safe territory. Could you speak any French? Did they know what to do with you?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       That was something. You had to have some knowledge of your French and had to know to handle it. As we were conquering the Germans we were so far back of the lines at the midway that it would take too much gas and time to take to where the action was.

DR. CRAWFORD:           You would burn up a lot coming and going.

MR. CARRUTHERS:       So we had to move the whole squadrons up to the secondary place. So the way that they would do, was two of the squadrons would move and then the two squadrons would land there. Then the next day the other two would move and we would land there. Then we got into a dog fight on this particular day we were going helter skelter all over the sky shooting at one another. When the evening came and it got darker and darker. I got my map and I couldn't recognize a d--- thing under me. I didn't know where the new field was in relation to it although it was marked on my map. There wasn't a river or lake or anything that I could relate. I flew down by a couple of railroad stations trying to read the name of the station house as to what it was and I couldn't make anything out of that. I didn't know where the lines were so finally I decided I was



getting low on my secondary tank and it was already low on gas, that I would have to land.

DR. CRAWFORD:           Was there enough light to see where to land?

MR. CARRUTHERS:        So I picked out a place and made a good landing safely . I got out my 45 and was ready. Soaked a handkerchief and the oil on the bottom of the plane.

DR. CRAWFORD:           So you could burn the plane if you were on the wrong side.

MR. CARRUTHERS:        If I was on the wrong place. And I got out there and just waited. I waited and I waited, you know, and finally I heard voices. It kept coming and coming over the hill and finally I shot my gun and hollared, "Halt." They all halted and all the talking stopped. I asked them whether they were French or German.

"France, monsieur, France." So I said, "Advance." So they came on up and they never had seen any American flyers. They were just some pure old French folks still living up there. So the mayor came over and told me in his French and I barely understood it and he said he was the mayor and he wanted me to go to his house. I did. They wined and dined me you know. "Here's to France and Great Britain and United States," and all that. It got to be time to go home and this fellow took me by this big manure pile into his home and we got in and had supper and he had a very cute daughter. After dinner was over he made me understand that he and his wife



stayed in this room and his daughter stayed in the other and I could sleep in there. I went into the bedroom with his daughter. (Laughter) I had a very comfortable night!

Finally, the next day I told him I had to get to a telephone and they took me to one that was in a little town. I phoned in to headquarters and told them where I was after I had gotten it from him and they said, "We'll see if we can send a truck up there and see if we can start your plane and some gasoline for you and if you can't get off the ground, we'll just have to take it apart."

So I waited about a half a day more for them to get up there and then they showed up with gas and revved it up and by that time I could fly it back.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you far away?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, not too far away from the new field.

Someway in the quick confusion of trying to find a place when you have to, you know it is a little more difficult. Your mind doesn't work just exactly right. If you got a lot of altitude, you can calmly decide what you are going to do, but going through this dogfight I had gotten down pretty low on the ground there wasn't much of a way to get back up and take a look.

DR. CRAWFORD: How many planes did you have in a squadron then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I think we had about twenty odd planes.

Each squadron was five planes--each flight was five planes. We had about four different flights.





Mitchell was just so hell-bent on winning the war that we had to get up at 4:30 in the morning and take a flight, come back and have breakfast and get a little rest maybe and go out again about 9:30.

DR. CRAWFORD: He wanted you out about dawn, didn't he?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Out at dawn, that's right. Then we would get back in and have lunch and then go out again at about 1:30 or 2:00 o'clock. Come back in and have about 30 minutes to a rest period and out you go again.

DR. CRAWFORD: Four flights a day then.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Four sorties every day of the time I was on that front that it was not raining.

I was so sick and tired of flying that when I came home I didn't want to see an airplane again. He made it so mandatory that we go out and win and everybody got the same kind of feeling of vibes, you know. Just like these basketball players you see how they have to rev them up. That was what took place.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that in the latter part of the war in late 1918s?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah, you see my first flight was on Friday, the 13th of September.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you feel about that?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I didn't want to go that day! But another friend of mine named DeOlive and I sat down in Germany together.



DR. CRAWFORD: What was his name?

MR. CARRUTHERS: DeOlive--D-E-O-L-I-V-E.

DR. CRAWFORD: Together you shot one down on Friday the thirteenth.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it was not unlucky for you.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Sure it wasn't. So I always felt like I had the thirteenth as my lucky day. When I went in there and started in the first drive which started in early September. And we were over in November--over the war, see. So it wasn't but a short time, however, it was just a vivid short time. Everyday the weather was good between September and October. Some days it got very cool at night.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did the cold weather affect the performance of the planes any?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, it did not. It wasn't cold enough to do that. We were the ones that were affected because we had fur-lined suits that were electrical-ly wired and you plugged them in and you had a little prop down along the sides and the more it turned the warmer we got and it helped us very much to stay warm.

DR. CRAWFORD: I did not realize that they had that that early. But you never got parachutes?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Never did. I was on one sortie on a balloon-busting program and boy when we went



down on that blimp I thought the whole world had exploded-- everything--flying onions they call them came up in just a circle of fire. If they hit your plane you were just gone.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was that just the gas in the blimp?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, that was a type of explosive from the anti-aircraft--flaming onions. As soon as we would get close to the d--- balloon the boys would all jump out in parachutes. And they would start hauling it down. So the closer you get the lower that blimp is.

DR. CRAWFORD: Because they were winding it down.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah, you are not running around where you have something you can aim at or dodge these things. So it was either concentrate on that altitude and he came on down and down and down. I got a belly full of that first trip. I asked them not to put me on it anymore.

DR. CRAWFORD: Those balloon-busting expeditions.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, did you hit any of the blimps.

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, I don't have any feeling that we got any of them. A boy named Frank Luke out of Texas became quite a balloon buster. He got a very fine reputation for it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they using them for observation?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh yes. They were just a plane flying high. It was observing with binoculars and more detail what the Americans were doing and where the





Americans were moving and whether they were coming forward and it got to the point where they withdrew them all because they were not doing enough good and the men didn't like them.

DR. CRAWFORD:           How close did you get to the front in your second airfield?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       There were times we flew far over the front. We flew back into Germany.

DR. CRAWFORD:       But how close were your fields to the front lines?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Sometimes forty minutes or so from the base.

DR. CRAWFORD:       Far enough back to be safe?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Yes. We never had a bombing raid on our field all the time I was there. Some of them did. I suppose they were more vulnerable to where the Germans were.

DR. CRAWFORD           Were you bombing the German airfields at this time?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Yes, the commanding officer commanded that we go down and strafe them. They weren't as well fortified as the balloons were at all. There were times we wrecked a whole lot of airplanes doing it.

DR. CRAWFORD:       They were parked out on the airfield I suppose?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       They were parked or in the hangers or whatever.



DR. CRAWFORD: Were they camouflaged?

MR. CARRUTHERS: All of them were camouflaged on the top. They were painted that way.

DR. CRAWFORD: But you could still tell them.

MR. CARRUTHERS: But you could still tell them. You could still see the field, landing fields, trucks and everything. It was not hard to know where you were.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you use bombs or guns?

MR. CARRUTHERS: We used both and dropped the bombs and strafed with the machine guns.

DR. CRAWFORD: Everyone you destroyed there was one that didn't get in the air. (Laughter)

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah, we got no credit for that.

DR. CRAWFORD: You did not get any credit for destroying them on the ground?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, that was just one of the sorties and one of the major hazards there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they have anti-craft guns around the air fields?

MR. CARRUTHERS: A lot of them did.

DR. CRAWFORD: More of those flying onions?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, I didn't see the flying onions around the air fields.

DR. CRAWFORD: What were they, big anti-aircraft shells? Were they big--the flying onions?



MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know what they were, but I never saw anything like them. They looked like a ring of fire and we called them flying onions.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they keep gasoline up with you? Did you ever run low?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, very often ran low. We had a spare tank--a neureece tank we call it. When your main tank got low then you turned on that. Then you headed for home!

DR. CRAWFORD: That reserve tank was supposed to be enough to get you back?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, it was calculated to go a certain distance. I don't know what it was. We knew when we got on that we'd better head on right for home. Don't stop to pick up any gas.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you think the planes got better as the war went on?

MR. CARRUTHERS:s Oh yes, yes, they improved right along. It was the Spad 7 Spad 8 and Spad 10 and 11, 12 and 13.

DR. CRAWFORD: New models?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: They made a lot of advances in the war.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh yes, but we never had an American fighter plane.





DR. CRAWFORD: Always using the British or the French.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Always using the French planes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did America never produce any?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know, Doctor, when I joined the squadron here in Memphis, I suppose the Signal Corps didn't have a hundred airplanes. Why after three years of air fighting over there and seeing what was going on we didn't come to life with more equipment. There were a lot working on it but they didn't get them out until the time when the war was over. We got out a little plane called the Thomas Morris Speed Scout which would have been equal to a Spad--made in California. I remember that because there was an ad in one of the aviation magazines that they were taking bids on some of those. I bid ninety dollars on one and got it. FOB Long Beach, California.

DR. CRAWFORD: They had to ship it to you by train?

MR. CARRUTHERS: They had to ship it to me by freight.

Six hundred dollars! So I started out getting reports from all the little cities from here and there asking them if they had an airport. There weren't enough airports if I had gone out there and put it together that I could have flown it back. And when I went to the bank and ask my banker to let me have six hundred dollars, he said, "Carruthers, you already owe so and so. No more money particularly to buy an airplane! (Laughter)



DR. CRAWFORD: When was that? Was that in the twenties, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh in '20, '21, or '22. I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: Shortly after the war?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were all of them biplanes that you saw?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, we had some monoplanes. A very fine little monoplane but it was not capable of carrying enough to carry machine guns and bombs. While it was a speedier plane than the Spad, it didn't have the sustaining power. So none were developed. Fact about the matter, the Germans had some triplanes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MR. CARRUTHERS: The French did too for awhile, but they went out before we got there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you see any of them?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I saw them, but I never saw them fly. I saw them flying, but I never flew one.









THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "HISTORY OF WORLD WAR I AVIATION, MEMPHIS". THE DATE IS FEBRUARY 4, 1987. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. LOUIS CARRUTHERS. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS. INTERVIEW II.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Carruthers, what was the best plane in your opinion that was in service in France?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, in the fighting forces, I believe that the Spad was the top plane to fly. It became that way towards the very end of the war and prior to that the Nieuport was a very fine plane. Eddie Rickenbacker and few of them were in flying Nieuports in the 90th Squadron in what was called the Paris attempt by Germans to take it. They had a little difficulty with fabric coming off of the wings.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of the Nieuports?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. The Nieuports also had a new motor in them called the monosoupape which was a radial motor and instead of having an excelerator to speed it up and slow it down, it had a selection. You run it on one cylinder, three cylinders, six cylinders and then nine. You go tat-tat-tat-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-ZZZZZZZZZZZZ. Sometimes



that was taking in the same amount gas all this while and it would get under the cowl of the hood and sometimes explode. They had a couple of fatalities on that account, they think. That was soon changed and put aside. It was a fine little motor to strafe troops with and all of that because you could come in like your motor was about to cut off and then you see these Germans all running around to catch you then you let go of your bombs and your machine guns. That gave them a little bit of a surprise.

DR. CRAWFORD: I can see that coming in on a very few cylinders.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I got to France in November of 1917. I got into Issoudun just about Christmas time. I worked as a builder of barracks and latrines over there for about three months to get enough places to keep the coming flyers in. Sooner or later we began to get these Nieuports which were 23 and 18 and a 15, I believe. You started out and when you're ready to start training, flying in what was called a Vaucouleur which was a plane with a clipped wing, the same motor in it, and just in a field with a couple of big lines down there the way you are supposed to travel on it. You get in and put your. . .

DR. CRAWFORD: Vaucouleur?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Vaucouleur. That was to teach you how to use your rudder against the torque of the motor because if you didn't, it would certainly turn off in one direction, you know, before you knew it.



DR. CRAWFORD: That was a radial engine?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, it was still the rotary engine that we had, not a radial, but a rotary.

DR. CRAWFORD: The whole engine turned?

MR. CARRUTHERS: The whole engine turned. Getting used to that and the lighter weight of the planes over there was a little bit tricky and it cost us some accidents and some injuries, but the boys got over it and we learned how on those Vaucouleurs to get out there and go down that line. When we did that, we were ready to go over to a duoplane. We had fresh instructors there. These Frenchmen were all ex-war pilots or war pilots on leave. They were very careful of themselves and us too because we felt like we were pretty wild little fellows, you know.

They had fixed the controls in the duoplanes. The landing gears had a big thick rubber band around the axle and the framework so that it would bump along resiliently on the rough ground.

DR. CRAWFORD: Having no springs?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, that was the springs. These Frenchmen contrived a way to take these bands and put the pilot's controls on the rudder. They had a positive control. Now if he had a positive control, and wanted it to go a certain way and I turned it to the left, it wouldn't turn to the left. Then as we got loose and they would tell which way to go--all we could use were fingers--down up and that sort of thing. We got a little bit tired of



not being able to have control of it. Most of us had had Jenny training, you know, and were flyers in an airplane, but they were very careful about it.

I remember myself and two or three other boys went to Major Spaatz--who was later to be the General.

DR. CRAWFORD: Carl Spaatz?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Carl Spaatz, yes. We told him how these Frenchmen were retarding us in learning how to fly. So he says, "We'll get rid of those bastards tomorrow." (Laughter)

Then some later they did get rid of the French pilots and put us in command of it. Then we instructed and then he thought, "Well, now some of these boys don't come away as fully instructed as they should. So what we'll do is set up a testing after the regular instructor has let them go." So you got your training on these Nieuports and as you got lachered to go ahead on your own to solo you had to come to one of the testors and he had to approve you. They were usually some of the more developed pilots so that they could cut down the risk of both crashes and deaths and things like that. So I was a testor for quite awhile after instructing for about four months.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you doing that through the spring of 1918?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, we finally got the trainee field all ready and enough accommodations for pilots coming in to get fully trained then we had five dif-





ferent fields at Issoudun . You had your instruction at one field. That was number one. Number two was formation flying. Number three was aerobatics--how you make your twists and turns and loops and spins. The next one was gunnery. The gunnery was with cameras instead of guns. After this you were ready to get on the list as to whether you wanted to go to the front or what you wanted to do. We put through a lot of flyers and had them sort of drifting around on our hands there for awhile. Then they could see as they were forming these, they took the old Lafayette Escadrille and took the men out of that and made them the commanders of the different squadrons that they were forming.

DR. CRAWFORD:           Lafayette Escadrille was pretty experienced by then, wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Oh yes, they had had two or three years on the front and they were some d--- good pilots in it--some very clever ones. Then they were to establish a field somewhere where they wanted the fighter planes, the bomber planes, and observation planes. They got those located. Then as these pilots grew in number, they'd send us up to Orly, France. We were waiting for an order to pick up a plane at so and so to fly it out to the front and deliver it to the squadron that was going to be using it. Then we would get a ride back and come back on the train.

DR. CRAWFORD:           You were ferrying planes then?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Ferrying planes out to the front. Up until about the last part of August of '17.



DR. CRAWFORD: Of '17?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and then I got my orders. Let's see  
I had a file here with my orders in it.

Each order that I had to move around, I kept a copy of it. I  
feel kind of blessed of having all that information.

DR. CRAWFORD: You have the record.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now you were ferrying the planes until  
about August.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Then they assigned me to the 93rd Squad-  
ron Pursuit Group just about September 1  
st.

DR. CRAWFORD: Just in time for the fall offensive.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, that was the offensive that sent me  
to Verdun's eye.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, the American army was advancing by  
that time?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Getting ready to go.

DR. CRAWFORD: And it moved pretty fast during the fall.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, it did. It had to move fast because  
that was the last go-round.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you really did not have very long in  
one place, did you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, we were on a little place of Toul in  
the first go-round. We moved from there  
to another location sort of up behind Verdun in about 3 or 4  
weeks that's all. At our first location we were doing mostly



trench strafing, bombing troops as they were retreating.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was there much danger in bombing troops, then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, yes, there was some yes. We lost a few planes that way. Some of the ground fire was while it was spasmodic and chancey, but they sometimes hit. Billy Mitchell, you know, was a hellcat driver and he sat out so that we had to fly four sorties a day. The first one was at 4:30 in the morning before we got any breakfast.

DR. CRAWFORD: You went out on one before breakfast then!

MR. CARRUTHERS: That's right. Come back and get a bite of breakfast and take a little rest and go to the john and come back and get a cup of coffee and you were ready to go again. And you would go out and make that sortie and come back and eat your lunch and get a little bit of rest and take another one out at 1 o'clock. And fly that until about three and come back and get a little rest and fly til it was dark and you couldn't see.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was cutting it close because you didn't have much navigation aid, did you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: We didn't any, didn't have any! We just had to fly it by the seat of our pants and a map that you had in the plane. You learned enough about the terrain to know the rivers and the railroads and





those things because the country was not heavily populated and you had to learn to fly by your pants and the railroads and the roads.

DR. CRAWFORD: Railroads were a lot of help, I guess, weren't they?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh, a great big help.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were the maps good?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh, yes, very good. They were on a roll so that we could turn them as we advanced. I wish I had kept some of them because they were very very cleverly made.

DR. CRAWFORD: It sounds like it. I didn't realize that you could roll from position to position.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, that way you got a larger map of the area you were to fly in, you see.

Billy Mitchell set out the orders and whoever was under him did a magnificent job of pinpointing where the action was and keeping in touch with what was moving on the ground. He was the first one to put bombs on a fighter plane. We carried four twenty-pound bombs on those Spads. Did you see the one over at the office?

DR. CRAWFORD: You have one over the door in your office, don't you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was a twenty-pound bomb?

MR. CARRUTHERS: A twenty-pound bomb and they were very nicely made in that they had a little



propeller on the front. They were wired until you put them on the plane so that the propeller wouldn't move. Then when you put it on there was a thing that set down from your plane that went between the blades of the propeller. Then they cut the wire.

DR. CRAWFORD:           Would the wire be cut when you dropped it?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Oh yes, before you take off, that wire is cut. Now that gives you a chance, that propeller had to turn twenty-five revolutions before the thing would detonate. See, that was to prevent you from having a take-off accident and blowing up the whole thing.

DR. CRAWFORD:           I guess that there was no way that the propeller could turn when you were flying was there?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       No, because it was in between that little prop. The prop was there until it was dropped off.

DR. CRAWFORD:           Now I understand.

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Then it would start revolving. We either had two things to do: to strafe trenches or strafe the retreating Germans.

DR. CRAWFORD:           Which did you prefer?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Well, it didn't make any difference.  
That was what your orders were, you know.  
I remember one day the trenches were very hard to strafe because you couldn't zig-zag with them.



DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, they were in zig-zag rows, weren't they to prevent infilading fire?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, but when they started retreating on the roads, they had a line where they were going on, you know. I remember dropping one of my bombs on a gasoline truck, I guess it was. It had about twenty or thirty Germans sitting on top of it or hanging on to go back and get out of the way. I came in and dropped that bomb and hit that thing and I was just a little bit too low because it blew me up in the air like that and it d--- near didn't have enough power to go forward and scared the h--- out of me. I decided from then on I would check my timing on my bombing so that I wouldn't have one to explode and make something else explode and blow me up too. But it scared the devil out of me that day.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Mr. Carruthers, what kind of anti-aircraft fire did you get when you were strafing trenches or troops? You'd get small armed fire, I guess?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, just as boys shooting their pistols or rifles at us.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was not a danger, eh?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, a lot of boys came in with shots all through the wings and some of them nearly hit them and some missed and some hit the motors and there were different casualties that happened to them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they have machine guns mounted for



anti-aircraft fire?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't think so. I think they just carried machine guns that they had in the trenches. If they would see us coming they would get off the road and try to set them up and machine gun us as we strafed the retreating troops. It could bother you, but your orders were to attack and that's what we did.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of anti-aircraft gunfire flack did they have?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know what to tell you of what kind it was. When you were protecting bombers and flying at a fairly high altitude they were these long range that shot up in the air and sort of tried to block you in.

DR. CRAWFORD: Heavy anti-aircraft guns?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. You know they would explode and at certain altitudes and then they were made up of just I suppose of scrap metals to make a rain flare. They couldn't actually hit your plane with one of them, but it was also the shell breaking up at that point. On this day I was telling you about. . .

DR. CRAWFORD: When you were hit?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. We were protecting some bombers below us going up into Germany and we were bombing some air fields as we traveled up. We were flying fairly high about 8,000 feet which was without oxygen or anything is pretty high and gets pretty rare. I was the rear





right-hand man on right-hand side of the three planes ahead of me and then the patrol leader. As we were flying along I began to feel like I had peed in my pants or something. I felt wet in the seat.

DR. CRAWFORD: But you had felt no pain?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I had felt no pain whatever. So I kept on getting colder and colder at that altitude so I put my gloved hand back here and I kept pressing and I didn't feel anything and took out my hand and it was bloody as the devil.

DR. CRAWFORD: You'd been bleeding and didn't know it.

MR. CARRUTHERS: And I saw this blood and got a little bit faint and I just fainted.

DR. CRAWFORD: While you were flying?

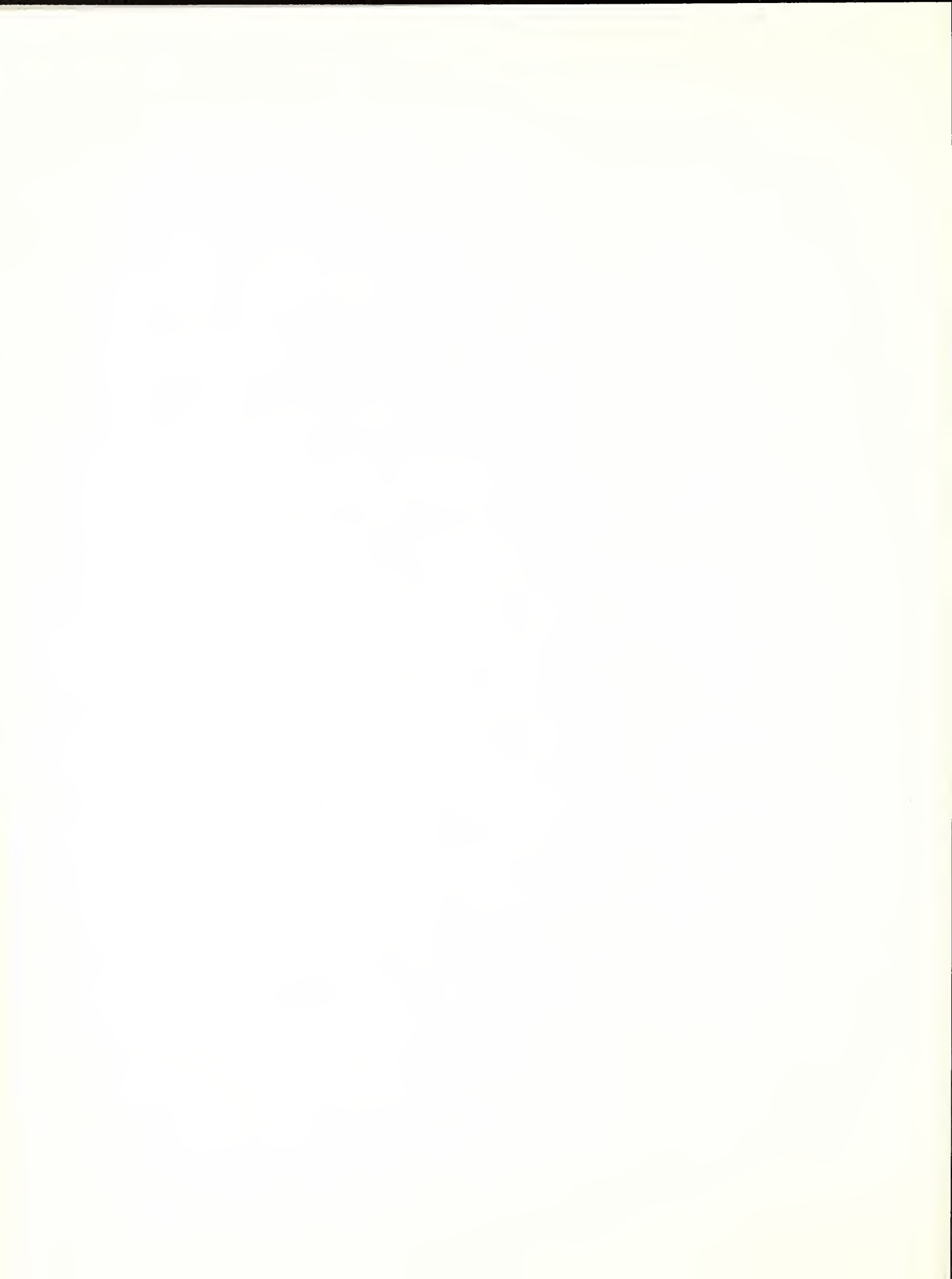
MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and I just fell out of the formation. There was no way for anybody to know for we had no radio or anything to tell them. And I really passed out. I think I thought enough that I was in trouble to cut off my ignition because I just kept dropping oh about four or five thousand feet.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was lucky you were that high.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, then all of a sudden I hit fresher air down there I came to life. Then I began looking for a place to land. The prop was dead.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you close to the ground when you regained consciousness?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know how close I was, but I



remember I kept looking and looking for a place to land because those Spads could land in any piece of on a city lot if you just could see them. You could side slip them in and land very easy. But nothing but the--what's that forest up there?

DR. CRAWFORD: Not the Argonne?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, just nothing but trees everywhere.

So I said, "H---, I'll just pancake in the trees. So I just lost all the speed I could and I hit those trees that way. And all of a sudden after I hit them the wheels caught in the limbs and I went up like this.

DR. CRAWFORD: Sort of nose down?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, nose down into the trees and there I stood. I sort of waited and tried to figure out what in the h--- was I going to do. Then I waited and I thought if I unfasten my belt I'm going to fall out and fall in the tree limbs and that isn't going to be too good. I thought how am I going to get out of this d--- thing. I guess I was bleeding more and more because I got to where I was cold as h---. This was in November.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you were losing blood.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and so finally I heard some voices.

And the next I knew, a couple of Frenchmen came out of the limbs there and motioned to me and talked to me and I couldn't understand them because I wasn't just quite wide awake.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they were in the trees?



MR. CARRUTHERS:       Climbed up in the trees. They got up in there some way. Pretty soon one of them came up and he reached down and says, "Let go", and something to that effect so I pulled the thing and almost fell out and then he helped me to get out of the plane and get into the limbs of the trees and took me almost down to the ground and to a ladder that they had.

DR. CRAWFORD:        You were pretty far up in the trees, weren't you?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Yes, and they kept on patting me on the back and everything was good and sooner or later they put me in one of their jeeps or whatever they had and off we raced down the road in between the trees there and got into this little old French hospital. They took me in there and I never did see a female nurse. They were all soldiers. Well, they grabbed me and stripped my pants off, you know, and dried me off and put a robe around me or something. They got me into what I suppose was the operating room and laid me flat on my face and the next thing I knew the doctor was in there cutting and probing and finally he pulled that thing out with a pair of pliers and showed it to me and sort of laughed. So he said, "Here, here, here". So I took it and put it in my pocket, but I never did know what happened to it.

DR. CRAWFORD:        He gave you the piece of shrapnel.

MR. CARRUTHERS:       The piece of shrapnel.

DR. CRAWFORD:        That he had dug out.



MR. CARRUTHERS: Right and then he touched it up and patted me on the back and said, "Goodbye or Bye Bye" or whatever it was and I went on back to my bed and laid there in bed until late in the afternoon and went on to sleep and the next morning I got up and here were my clothes that had been spoiled and my pants and my overalls all stacked there neatly and I kept seeing them go and come. They would bring me something to eat and then sooner or later I just got up and put my clothes on and went on out. Nobody to stop me and they hadn't made any records so far as I knew. So I just walked on out and saw one of these American trucks going down and I hollered at him and he stopped. "Well, Minnie, you back too, huh?"

DR. CRAWFORD: The dog is back from a walk.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Then I got a message to go down to this little town and call my major and told him about it. He pinpointed where I was and sent a motorcycle sidecar over there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember who your major was?

MR. CARRUTHERS: It was Major Hoffer. Very fine gentleman and very scholarly--very much a Frenchman and he'd been brought up and schooled in France. I remember I told him about it as much as I could. He said, "Come on". And I went back and he got the doctor in the squadron to look me over and the doctor said, "Well, you're okay now. Nothing wrong." You can go back to flying in the morning. I went in and told Major Hoffer that I was sort of ashamed of the





thing.

You know in a squadron you always have some men that are not as anxious to perform a fight as you would like for them to be.

DR. CRAWFORD:           They would use any excuse to miss it, wouldn't they?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Yes, we had two or three that would peel off anytime we got close to some serious danger, you know. The old saying was, "that we wish he'd get shot in the butt on the way home". (Laughter) That just worried the h--- out of me, you know. I told him that I would just rather that nothing be on the record about it. There was nothing ever put on the record. I just got a plane the next morning and went right back to flying.

DR. CRAWFORD:           Well, you had lost a lot of blood though. You had obviously cut a blood vessel of some kind.

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Something had, but I wasn't hindered in anything I needed to do. They fed me up pretty good. I missed a couple of pretty good meals. I got back on the program for the next day and went on out and finished it up.

DR. CRAWFORD:           And you did not report that officially?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       No, I made no official report at all.

                          The guys asked me what happened to me and I said, "Well, I just got sick and had to fall out. I wrecked the plane trying to get it down. It took me a day



or two." They don't question each other too d--- much about those things. It was just a part of what you were supposed to do like riding a bike, if you fall off and hurt something and there you go.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, do you remember what day it was you were wounded?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, it was around the 4th or the 5th of November.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was getting close to the end of the war.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. All of us, of course, had heard on the radio all the stuff about the meeting --the executive meeting--hoping to have an armistice and all that. But I flew on the morning of the 11th.

DR. CRAWFORD: You flew right up until the end of the war when it ended on November 11th at 11 o'clock, wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: That's right. I took a morning patrol-- two patrols that morning--at 4:30 and the next one. A funny thing, we had a very interesting personality by the name of Charlie Maxwell. The guy was about 6 feet 6 and everytime he got into a plane he had to throw out the cushion and put in a little pad about so big so he wouldn't be over the wing, you know. (Chuckle) He was in another patrol. We saw this plane go down in a fairly wide open field enough so you could land and wondered what in the h--- was happening. Two of us, the leader signaled you and



you go.

DR. CRAWFORD: In a gesture he gave you the order?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. There was no way of communication whatever except by hand and we went down and circled this little field and we could see Charlie's plane there just stalled. He got hit in the motor or something, he landed okay. We decided that one of us would land and try to pick him up. And we went in to land beside him and all these Germans came out of the woods there with their guns all up and shooting, you know. So we had to take off again.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were under fire then!

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and then we tried it on the other side and the same thing happened. We circled and watched to see what we could do.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you ever get your wheels on the ground?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, never did get them down. So we saw these Germans all just closed in on him and finally captured him and we knew we couldn't go in there and take him away from field infantry or whatever. So we had to forget it and fly back. Our gas didn't last all day.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that the last day of the war?

MR. CARRUTHERS: The last morning of the war.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he was captured and it ended at 11 in the morning.

MR. CARRUTHERS: That's right. We came on back and just



thought he was a casualty or at least a prisoner of war temporarily or whatever. When we got ready for the armistice, everybody unloaded all of their money and designated these boys to get into their cars and motorcycles and go out and buy all this wine and all the stuff you could get.

DR. CRAWFORD:        To celebrate.

MR. CARRUTHERS:      And had the big GI cans all cleaned up  
and poured it in no matter what it was.

(Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD:        Mixed up.

MR. CARRUTHERS:      A funny thing, in the rooms we had  
little gasoline heaters to heat our water for shaving and when we needed warm or hot water. We kept a champagne bottle full of Esso gasoline to light that thing up with. Then we would have a bottle of Triple Sec or something to take a swig out of and particularly at those 4:30 in the morning deals. I remember taking it up to drink that I just got full up with it and I went to the barracks. I said, "Gee, I would like to have some water." And I looked over and grabbed that bottle and it was that Esso.

DR. CRAWFORD:        Goodness, gasoline!

MR. CARRUTHERS:      Yes, all of a sudden (vomiting noise) and  
it was a good thing too because  
everything came up you know.

DR. CRAWFORD:        Threw up all of it.

MR. CARRUTHERS:      Yes, threw all of it up and didn't touch





another drop then.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were probably the soberest person around at the time.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, the second day--the thirteenth I think it was--we were all sitting at mess having lunch or whatever it was and in walks this guy with a little bit of beard and a German uniform on with a soldier escorting him. And it was this guy, Charlie Maxwell. He had been forced to move on up with the German troops and they were in Kharhorstz, you know.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were where?

MR. CARRUTHERS: They were retreating.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MR. CARRUTHERS: They were going to have to give up. The Armistice had already been signed. So they didn't pay very much attention to him. So when he saw, and he was in this little old hotel or something and they moved him in there. Evidently, there was another German officer in there because they left one of his uniforms. So he took off his and put on this and said as a German he would walk and got rides all the way back to his regiment.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, I wonder if he spoke German?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't think he did. He lived in Texas and I've tried and tried year after year to get a hold of him and never could. He was a character.

DR. CRAWFORD: He had the shortest periods of captivity of anyone around then--just a few hours



before it was over. But you were under rifle fire when you were trying to land and pick him up.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, they were shooting at us all they could.

DR. CRAWFORD: How would you have gotten him in your plane? He was a very large person.

MR. CARRUTHERS: He would sit on the fuselage on the back. He would just sit on it, that's all and hold on to the cockpit.

DR. CRAWFORD: On the outside. Well, of course.

MR. CARRUTHERS: He'd probably have to stretch out on it and if I didn't fly it evenly he could fall off. But I could understand those, you know. And one guy did do that one time and got back home with it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was rescued in that way?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: When you had the loss of blood and the plane went down in the woods, you were given a new one. Was it the same kind?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh yes, the same kind. They had a place called Colombe LaBelle fifteen minutes from our location that was an assembly point. That's where we took the planes when we ferried them out to the front to Colombe LaBelle and they moved them around where the squadrons were. When I phoned the major before I left the site of the fall where the plane was damaged. I told him I said, "That plane is wrecked." They brought it on back to the



field and I don't know who inspected it, but there was one bomb left on it and that is the bomb hanging over there. And that insignia that I have was cut off of it or else it was going to salvage.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had you had that painted on?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Every plane had that on them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Everyone in the 93rd?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, They had that same Indian head on it. You see we had four Indian heads for the four different squadrons that were in that pursuit group. Each one was a different one and Major Hoffer, our commanding officer you see, and the Lafayette's had an Indian head. That was the origin of them. They took different tribes. I don't know what mine was. I never found out. It was the Indian head.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you flying a Spad when the war ended?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a recent model wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, the last model. Thirteen with a Hispano Suiza motor.

DR. CRAWFORD: How were they different?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, I got a hold of a little story here from a man and his Spad. It came from the museum in Columbus, Ohio. This guy tells about it. This Spad was a society of so and so and so and so. There were three initials that made up the name. I'll let you take it



in if you want to read it. Let's see here. He had a Spad-7. I had a Spad-13. In one of his battles he came down and found that he had been hit by 120 bullets in the plane.

DR. CRAWFORD: That took a lot of counting.

MR. CARRUTHERS: (Reading) "When the war broke out in Europe, one of the companies that set to work designing war planes was Societé Pour Aviation et ses Dérivés(Deperdussin)or Spad. The company had been founded by a silk manufacturer named Ormand Deperdussin. But when he was jailed in 1914 for missing company funds, Aviator Louis Bullerio took over and changed the company's name to the Society for Aviation . . . He also kept the company's designer, Louis Beshereau. Brooks' first Spad was a V-7 which he named Smith in direct honor of his fiancée. This is something unusual. Her name was Ruth and Ruth was at Smith College. [He said], "I didn't like the idea of having the plane come down, with a busted tail or something and saying Ruth's tail is busted. " (Laughter) That's sort of the thing I got in the shape of. (Laughter)

So they kept on from the number 7 to the 8 the 10 and the 13 constantly improved by this designer. He finally had one of the finest and most durable planes in the service. It was better than any of the German Fokker's.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they all made in France?

MR. CARRUTHERS: All were made in France. We never had any American planes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were any British planes over there at the





time?

MR. CARRUTHERS: They were in the British lines, but not with us.

DR. CRAWFORD: What planes were they flying?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh, Sopwith and Camel and SE. 5's and a great number of them. I couldn't name them all to save my life.

DR. CRAWFORD: But the Spad was the best of the lot you think?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Spad was the best fighter plane that we had on the market. A hundred and ninety horse power Hispano Suiza very dependable and he tells about the Vickers Gun which was giving us a lot of trouble. I've started out. . .

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that was a British gun, wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, they first had Hotchkiss, which was a French gun I think. It might have been British. (Reading from this article) "The young aviator was not completely pleased with the Spad 7 which he dubbed as 'the flying brick' because of its notorious gliding characteristics. Now was he fond of the untrustworthy armament? Like the Spad 7 which had one unfortunately loudly Vicker's Gun. When I say that advisedly so, because we worked on them and they still jammed. When you had only one gun that was undependable. You did what you could by praying a little. Finally, they put two of them on which made it better."



By the time I got the plane they were Remington's and they were fine. But sometimes the ammunition wasn't right. Several of our boys all had them speed up their firing to where it cut off one side of the prop. When it did that, you were just like this<sup>1</sup>, so you had to keep shooting and cut off the other side. Then you had no prop at all and you had to land.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that the Remington?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were the guns water-cooled?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Air-cooled.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they had two of them. How much ammunition did you carry?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I can't remember. They just put a big chain of them in there and we just shot till we ran out.

DR. CRAWFORD: You couldn't reload up there?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had to do that on the ground?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, the crews had to do that stuff.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you had a belt of them.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Two belts--two guns.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's right, one for each gun.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. Sometimes you would open the compartment to see that they were in there, so that you wouldn't go off. Some guy forgot to load one side once for somebody. Of course, he didn't forget the load



anymore.

DR. CRAWFORD: I wouldn't think not. (Laughter)

MR. CARRUTHERS: The crews were very very good, very dependable and they got to know you and like you and would give their whole life for you.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had to depend on them.

MR. CARRUTHERS: You had to, absolutely had to.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the armament on the German planes? They were using Fokkers, weren't they?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, I don't know what guns they used. They used a lot of Fokkers, but there were others. I've forgotten here.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, you had some planes that you shot down. Were they fighter planes?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I am going to get to that now and see if I can see what they were. Pfalz, I believe was one of them. (Reading from one of his records.)

"Credited with two official victories and one victory was not confirmed." I've got a record of what they were. I believe it is on that chart up there. I'm not sure. These are all the . . . .

DR. CRAWFORD: That is a summary record?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Ninety-third Aero Squadron.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't believe they show the plane.

DR. CRAWFORD: August 15, 1918, destruction of two enemy



aircraft.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Then I think on the next to the last day  
on the ninth or tenth I got one didn't  
I? Did it have the date?

DR. CRAWFORD: It does not tell the dates here.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Where is that record? I can't remember  
now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember the day that you shot  
them down ?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I know the first one was on Friday, the  
thirteenth.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was supposed to be unlucky for some-  
one.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I tried to be sick and all and the doctor  
said, "You're not sick, don't be scared,  
go on out there." (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, what happened on that date, Mr.  
Carruthers?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Nothing, except we got into a dog fight.  
And that means a dog fight and I'm going  
to give you a dog fight here if you don't go on sit down and  
behave yourself. (Speaking to his dog).

DR. CRAWFORD: He's a good dog.

MR. CARRUTHERS: When I married Helen she was living in  
this big four-bedroom two-story house  
over here by herself and she had had to have somebody to help  
her watch after it.





DR. CRAWFORD: Watch dogs are good to have.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Some are and some are not.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the dog fight--were you high or low when you had it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: We were high. The orders came to intercept fighter planes who were attacking certain positions of the Americans. We went to that altitude in numbers and if you saw any planes or they were close to you or they were below then you went in on them. Sometimes as many as two or three squadrons could be fighting four or five Germans down there. We beat them down to the earth somehow. It was a question of dog eat dog. And that's the way Billy Mitchell wanted it to be. Old Eddie Rickenbacker was systematic and he was a leader and when he went down he went down and he was positive enough, of his accuracy and his shooting, that he usually got his man. And if he didn't, the rest of them came on in after him. He had first choice and that was the case many times and sometimes it was not.

My leader was an ace. My leader was Chet Wright.

DR. CRAWFORD: Chet Wright?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. He was one of us. Hoffer was the commanding officer, but he never flew.

He was on the ground checking the results and checking how well the orders were carried out and that sort of thing.

There was just no way to know until you went to 5,000, 10,000, or 6,000 you'd go to a certain area, how you would go and try to strafe a field that had some German fighters at



it.

You might succeed at it or you might have Germans on your tail before you knew it. So it was follow orders and do as much as you could.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have any advantage in altitude?  
Could you get higher than the German planes?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Sometimes, it would be depending on where you were. You just couldn't turn it up and climb up like these boys do today. You had to reach a higher altitude by the laborious way by putting on the gas and climbing. You couldn't reach those boys up there sometimes hardly and that's the reason all of us were given different altitudes to fight so there would be enough people in the area to block them out. That's what we did. We just simply blocked the German flying corps to nothing.

DR. CRAWFORD: Because you would have planes at different altitudes up and down?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they out-numbered much by that time by the fall of 1918?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Were the Germans? I don't know how to say what the numbers were, Dr. Crawford.

It was problematical and you didn't get any of that history and you got an order and that was what you were to follow and do no matter which part of the day you were out. That baby was put right on your cockpit face there and you knew what



you had to do. You had a flight leader and he led the way and if he motioned down, you went down and if he motioned up, you went up, or he said that away or this away that's the way you followed.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have any positions you flew to give you better visibility? Did you fly any circles or did you circle when you were going up?

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, there were lots of maneuvers that once you had contact with the enemy plane it was up to you to either gain altitude or do the Lufberry circle that is well known as a maneuver. Immelmann turn was one where you pulled up and going back down after him. Sometimes you got into a spin to get away and other times you just dove. It was almost left to the individuality of the pilot what you had been trained to do aerobatics at the field and what he was told.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have superior speed in a dive in a Spad?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, we could outdive anything on the front and safely. A lot of them couldn't dive. They would put on the motor and end up on the ground.

DR. CRAWFORD: You didn't want to lose your wings!

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, but you could come back in and those wires would be just a little bit loose but they would tighten them up. And it was the most stable plane that I had ever flown in my life. I hadn't flown many,



but I had flown some of the British when they would come by and some of the French.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you could outdive the Fokkers then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, you could. We would turn them right straight up and go down full motor.

DR. CRAWFORD: Could you maneuver as well as they could?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Under some tricks they had a little bit better climb than we had. That was the way the wing was shaped--the camber of it. Like this Voyager it had a certain camber to the wing that let them go without holding the plane back. A lot of those planes were designed one way or the other. As this man says in the earlier Spads they weren't so hot, but the designer kept on improving and improving.

DR. CRAWFORD: Kept improving as the war went on?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, as the boys came back and reported their troubles.

DR. CRAWFORD: About what was the maximum elevation could you reach with them?

MR. CARRUTHERS: You could get to 8,000 or sometimes 8,500 feet depending on the atmosphere and weather. But you were struggling for air when you did that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did any of the planes have oxygen then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, not anyone had thought about that. We only had three controls in the plane.

One that told us how fast the motor was and what your altitude was and a tacometer to tell you what your motor speed





was and a gasoline gauge. You look at one of these things now and God knows, I can't even read them!

DR. CRAWFORD: I've seen them. They seem to have dials and gauges everywhere.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I'm glad we didn't have them, but this plane that this man flew is in the Smithsonian.

DR. CRAWFORD: The Spad?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. He is taken in that picture beside it. I remember being there. One of the photographers asked me to get in it and pose for him and I did. When I looked at that instrument board and inside of that plane, I said, "How in the h--- do they fly that Gyork?"

DR. CRAWFORD: This article you are referring to is in Air and Space, February-March, 1987 about the Spad. What about your first dog fight that day? You were at high altitude? Do you remember how it happened?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Nothing except that we ran into a squadron of Germans and I think there was the old flying circus because it was pretty highly decorated.

DR. CRAWFORD: Baron Richthofen?

MR. CARRUTHERS: But Richthofen had been killed when we got out there.

DR. CRAWFORD: The fall of '18.

MR. CARRUTHERS: He was killed by the British lines over



there. Dr. Crawford, it is hard to tell what your reactions were sixty or seventy years ago.

DR. CRAWFORD: And it happened in a hurry.

MR. CARRUTHERS: It happened in a hurry and you are young and you were desirous of being good at it and you did your d-----t. When you thought you had a chance to shoot one down you let go of your machine guns and hoped if you didn't you passed on by them, over him or under him or whatever.

DR. CRAWFORD: If you missed the pass?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you under fire in return at that one?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I think we were under fire right along of the first part of the offensives. It seemed to me it was tougher than the Argonne because we just about cleaned out or wiped out all the Germans who had any real fortitude or any good planes left. We were just that much superior.

DR. CRAWFORD: They had heavy losses by that time.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, they had heavy losses. Everytime we got back where there was a field, we would try to bomb the d--- things. We'd go in and wreck a few planes. Sometimes, they would haul a plane out and take off after us. Well, we'd take off and leave too.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they have anti-aircraft guns around the fields?



MR. CARRUTHERS:       Some of them did.   Some of them were  
                              pretty well fortified.   Well, we didn't  
have any on our field.   And I don't remember whether we had a  
bombing.

DR. CRAWFORD:         Did some of the American airfields have  
                              bombing attacks?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       I don't remember any of them.   Not in the  
                              last stages.   Now they may have had it  
up in the Chateau Thierry when the Germans first tried to take  
Paris.

DR. CRAWFORD:         Did you have any trouble identifying  
                              planes?   Could you always tell when you  
saw them?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Not always.   It took a good memory and an  
                              eagle eye depending upon whether you were  
sighting them in the sun or away from the sun or what.   Some  
of us were a little better than others.   We knew our own  
group.   We didn't have any trouble with that phase of it.

DR. CRAWFORD:         The sun was always your blind spot,  
                              wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS:       Right.   There was this tough time trying  
                              to get into the sun then you could see  
whatever was out there.   But if you were flying into the sun  
you could be flying into trouble.   I had a book here that I  
don't think maybe you've seen.   It's so worn out from use  
here.

DR. CRAWFORD:         Well, good books tend to get a lot of



use.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Willis J. Abbott, have you ever heard of him?

DR. CRAWFORD: I don't think so.

MR. CARRUTHERS: This is an 1918 edition.

DR. CRAWFORD: Just after the war and I guess it starts with the sinking of the Lusitania.

MR. CARRUTHERS: It has some very very fine beautiful stuff in it.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'm glad to see those illustrations. I like a book with good illustrations, photographs, paintings and maps.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't think there is very much in the air in this one. When I got into the Signal Corps. here, there were less than 100 planes in the air service.

DR. CRAWFORD: America certainly had a slow beginning, didn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: It did, a terrific slow beginning. We had to come all the way through everything.

DR. CRAWFORD: It's lucky America had the industrial capacity.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, we were very very fortunate. If they had been fighting over here, we probably wouldn't have had a lot of it left.

DR. CRAWFORD: As happened to Germany.





MR. CARRUTHERS:        Yes. As we grew in our ability to  
                             perform.

                 I have to find the old box in the attic at the old home  
that mother kept somewhere.

MRS. CARRUTHERS:        He wrote fairly frequently.

DR. CRAWFORD:            He even had a legible hand which people  
                             had then better than now.

MRS. CARRUTHERS:        He wrote very well.







THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS AN ORAL HISTORY OF MEMPHIS AVIATION. THE DATE IS AUGUST 4, 1987. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. LOUIS CARRUTHERS. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS. INTERVIEW III.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Some publicity I had. A man called me up from Clarksdale.

DR. CRAWFORD: This book might help us. Now, what is the title, Mr. Carruthers?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Curtis Edward Presley, 1894-1975 and he was an aviator. He is dead now. A Pictorial Diary of World War I. Compiled by his daughter, Mary Martha Merritt.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's a book with photographs. That's a photograph of him circled in front of . . . What kind of a plane is that?

MR. CARRUTHERS: That was a Spad.

DR. CRAWFORD: Oh, yes, like you were flying at the end of the war.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, a World War I Spad. He's a banker down there.

DR. CRAWFORD: In Mississippi, Clarksdale, did you say?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I didn't know whether that was something you might want to follow through on.



DR. CRAWFORD: I'll take a look at it, sir, because the photographs will help.

MR. CARRUTHERS: The photographs are very similar to my album, but I haven't gotten it fully reconstructed as he has. These are all done much better and a better job than I have.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, he has gotten his organized and you are still working on yours, aren't you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I'll die before I get through with it. But that is a picture of him. Now, this is the property, but you can't see a darn thing of it down there in Mississippi. These are a lot of his individual small pictures. My catalog is almost the same thing.

DR. CRAWFORD: You made old photos.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I've got to get mine where I can get them into sequence. But I thought it was a very interesting book and very well done. I was going to copy some parts of it because he had these maps. This is Commercy and Toul and that was in the area where we were fighting.

(Reading) "Flag made by women of France and presented to American aviators in training in a Paris ceremony." I don't remember that particularly. He's got some really interesting things.

DR. CRAWFORD: Pictures made in France from his album, you can tell.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, this is the wreck of a plane here. My pictures were just a little smaller, but he





did a better job of it. Here's his squadron again.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was he in the Ninety-third?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, I don't know what squadron he was in. I haven't gotten to that point. But this is a row of flyers on the front and a picture of the Spad. This is a picture of one of the towns, I don't remember which. I haven't studied it. This is his whole bunch and I have a similar picture. It is very interesting. I didn't know if you would want to take in any further ground or whether you'd like to contact Presley.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, our library can get a copy.

MR. CARRUTHERS: That would be very good. That is his citation from Pershing which I have one. It is very very interesting. It is well done and I am going to try to get some of mine in better shape and in as good a shape as he got his.

DR. CRAWFORD: I hope you will, Mr. Carruthers.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I am going to do it. Let's see here, this comes along about . . .

DR. CRAWFORD: There's a 1943 date.

MR. CARRUTHERS: This came along after we were progressing with the . . .

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see who is governor there? That is Prentice Cooper. That would have been during World War II, I think.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, I think so. And here's Percy McDonald, who is on the Board up there.



DR. CRAWFORD: What board was that, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: This is the Tennessee Bureau of Aeronautics,  
1944.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, that's when they published this booklet  
on Aviation in Tennessee.

MR. CARRUTHERS: So it was really nicely done and some nice  
pictures in there about it. They came to  
praise the Red Baron and not to curse him (Chuckle)

DR. CRAWFORD: They have color photos too. Of course, they  
were making them by World War II.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, sure. There are some beautiful illus-  
trations in there. I didn't know if at some  
time you might like to call on that for anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: All right, that's good to know. The title  
is called, Facts on Aviation for the Future  
Flyers of Tennessee published by the Department of  
Aeronautics, 1944.

MR. CARRUTHERS: There is a painting out there that I don't  
know whether . . .

DR. CRAWFORD: The airport?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, besides the one downstairs on the first  
floor. It was formerly in a V.I.P. room.  
It's a picture of me standing before my plane in full color.

DR. CRAWFORD: Before a Spad?

MR. CARRUTHERS: It's a portrait, yes. When they began to  
expand they had to have that room and they  
took it down. Mr. Seale said they'd store it away for



another Fisher Showing somewhere. This is a letter that I got from some of my friends about those who contributed to have it painted.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, this is the letter [dated] October 27, 1970, from Peggy O'Daniel, your secretary, and that's the names of people who contributed to the painting of you. Yes, I see Judge Marion Boyd on there and Palmer Brown--plenty of people we know--Roy Harrover, and several others, Downing Pryor.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I have over at the office a picture with all these names written on it like an autograph showing that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, we are looking at a letter this year dated June 1, 1987 from the World War I Aviation Museum and Historical Foundation at Parker, Colorado. And you were to receive and are still to receive a commemorative medal from the government of France. Has that arrived yet? This was in June this summer.

MR. CARRUTHERS: It hasn't come yet.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it takes them awhile to get it over here probably.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Here is a history of all the orders I had going from the time I enlisted to the time I was discharged.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, now this is a file you have, your orders in service including enlisted reserve course certificate of enlistment, and the second of May, 1917, right



after the war started.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Did I give you the story about how that happened?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. Now here in June 22, 1917, you are going to Chicago, Chanute Field, wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, it was Ashburn, right out of Chicago.

DR. CRAWFORD: Oh, yes, and paying you fifty cents a meal for rations.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Very liberal.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, at the time. Now, let's see you had your other orders here, one of them November 14, you are a (reading) First Lieutenant, Aviation Section, Signal Reserve Corps. assigned to active duty and stationed at Garden City, Long Island. They were getting you ready to send you overseas, weren't they? From there, of course, you did go over and you are in France and in January 31, 1918, and you were reporting to the Third Aviation Instruction Center with a group there. It was from General James Harsord.

MR. CARRUTHERS: That would have the name Issoudun spelled out.

DR. CRAWFORD: No, sir.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I-s-s-o-u-d-u-n.

DR. CRAWFORD: That is Issoudun. I'm glad we got that because we'll get you there later. Now let's see. You are in France and a first lieutenant and assigned to Headquarters Detachment. Now, let's see by August 18, 1918.





MR. CARRUTHERS: Let me give you a little story.

DR. CRAWFORD: We have participating in serial flights. All right sir.

MR. CARRUTHERS: In between the time that I got my orders at Rantoul to go overseas there was a publication in the aviation field that stated that I had been made a first lieutenant. Now I never received the actual orders of that. So when I got on the boat to go to France I was a cadet and because the official active duty orders had never reached me I couldn't call myself a lieutenant although I had seen it in print. With one of the captains on the boat or something, he said, "Go ahead and wear your bars."

The next place we got to the officer said, "H--- no, you are not an officer yet, so you are still a cadet!"

DR. CRAWFORD: According to these orders, you were a commissioned officer from February 9, 1918.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, but you see, somehow they didn't know it.

DR. CRAWFORD: They didn't know it.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I had the d----- case of trying to get that back pay that you ever saw. I've got a whole file logged.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know what the government is like trying to deal with paperwork. Now by June 7, 1918, First Lieutenant Carruthers proceeded to Cazaux, France.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, that was a gunnery field.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's where you studied your gunnery?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Right.



DR. CRAWFORD: June 27th, you proceeded from that to Third Aviation Instruction Center.

MR. CARRUTHERS: That was Issoudun.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were going from Cazaux to Issoudun. Now, let's see --I see all the same thing here describing your duties--here's a list of first lieutenants and you are on it. Now, by August 4, 1918, [reading] from the Third Aviation Instruction Center, you will proceed to Orly, Department Seine, reporting to the commanding officer aviation thereat for instruction. What did you do at Orly, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I ferried the planes. They were planes that were ready to go to front that were assembled at Orly--that's one of the French fields. Us graduates of the aviation schools like Issoudun were sent there to get their preliminary training as to what was used on the front.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, here is an order on August 9th. You and three other lieutenants were to fly some type-13 Spads evidently--from Orly to Colombey-Les-Belles. You were ferrying.

MR. CARRUTHERS: That was the staging field for the different squadrons on the front.

DR. CRAWFORD: And now on the 15th of August, 1918, you are reporting and proceeding from Paris, France, to the location of the 93rd Aero Squadron reporting upon arrival to the commanding officer for duty and stationed with that organization. That's where you did your combat flying.



MR. CARRUTHERS: That's where I started, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Beginning with this order on August 15th, 1918

MR. CARRUTHERS: It doesn't say where it was or anything but  
that's how coy they were with them.

DR. CRAWFORD: They didn't like to give away the location,  
did they?

MR. CARRUTHERS: In case we were stopped or flew into Germany  
with their orders.

DR. CRAWFORD: They didn't have it written on there.

MR. CARRUTHERS: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now on September 17th, (this is my son's birth  
day) First Lieutenant L. S. Carruthers and  
First Lieutenant L. S. Harding, 93rd Aero Squadron, Third  
Pursuit Group are hereby credited with the destruction in  
combat of an enemy Pflaz at about 1,000 meters altitude near  
Woel at about 17 o'clock on September 13, 1918. That was a  
Friday, wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Friday, the thirteenth. (Chuckle)

DR. CRAWFORD: And you are given credit here in the order by  
order of Colonel Mitchell. Yes, this is a  
very good file to have.

Oh, now, they are writing on September 18th, 1918 about  
the difference in cadet and first lieutenant's pay and  
evidentially they are trying to get your pay records up to  
date. This is one from you to Disbursing Quartermaster.

(Reading) This is November 19, First Lieutenant L. S.  
Carruthers, 93rd Aero Squadron, Third Pursuit Group is



hereby credited with the destruction in combat of an enemy Fokker in the region of Montmedy, Stenay and Martincourt at 3500 meters altitude on November 5th, 1918 at 9:30 o'clock by order of Colonel Melly. December 1, you were relieved from duty with the 93rd Aero Squadron together with four other first lieutenants. The war was then over, of course.

This was by order of Lieutenant Colonel Aleshire. You had to turn in your compass then. They gave you a receipt for it.

(Reading) "November 26th, 1918 the following air service officers whose services are no longer required in the AEF (American Expeditionary Force) will proceed from the Third Aviation Instruction Center to Headquarters Base Section #5 reporting upon arrival to commanding general for return to the United States." That was good news, wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were one of a large group there--first lieutenants and second lieutenants--a lot of flyers there.

Now here is a discharge slip dated January 8, 1919. Now where was this--District of Paris. Well, you were to report to the District of Paris. Here is a receipt and you were turning in things--haversack, fork and knife and strap, meat can and cup, etc. Here is one January 9, 1919 which is a pay check for the month of November, 1918 amounting to \$1190.77.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Which was welcome.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, because you were getting ready to come home. Here is one from Camp Devens, Massachu-





setts, January 23, 1919. This includes some infantry officers, but let's see there has got to be others. Let's see if we can find some flyers on here. Yes, here you are. First Lieutenant, Class 1, and you were getting ready to come home.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I was home at Devens.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, back in the United States.

You were going to be sent from Garden City, to Garden City, Long Island. Now we are getting near the end of it. I can't make out the date on this, but it sums up your service. "You enlisted May 4, 1917 and called to active duty May 18, 1917. You passed your RMA tests October 1, 1917 and received notice of commission as first lieutenant October 31, 1917 and accepted on the same date. Then you were assigned to active as first lieutenant at Garden City, Long Island as Lieutenant Carruthers had left Garden City enroute overseas prior to receipt of orders." This assignment never became effective. Assigned to active duty as First Lieutenant on special order #31 on January 31, 1918 and reported for duty February 10, 1918. Honorably discharged from the service of the United States January 28, 1919.

Here is a statement which sums that up, I think: "The military service of Louis L. Carruthers officially credited with two air planes victories against the enemy awarded meritorious service certificate by the commanding general American Expeditionary Force for service performed during the St. Mihiel Offensive. A third which he thought was destroyed



was unfortunately unconfirmed. His name appears on a list of officers who demonstrated exceptional ability and pursuit and in connection therewith. It was stated that he was one of the best duo-control instructors and had made an excellent record at the front. Official statement furnished March 23, 1931, by the authority of the Secretary of War C. H. Bridges, Major General--the Adjutant General."

"Now, this is November 29, 1930 you are appointed Captain in the National Guard and assigned to the 105th Observation Squadron, 30th Division Aviation National Guard. Affective this date by William C. Boyd, Adjutant General."

MR. CARRUTHERS:(Looking at the next paper)That's the discharge isn't it?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, and that was a welcome paper, wasn't it?

Dated January 31, 1919. From Memphis and the state of Tennessee when enlisted he was 21 years old and by occupation, a student. He had light brown eyes, brown hair, brown complexion, and was five feet, eight inches in height.

MR. CARRUTHERS:It didn't give my weight there, did it?

DR. CRAWFORD: No, it did not, sir. That's a fine set of papers, sir. You want to take good care of them.

MR. CARRUTHERS:I managed to keep those things around and suddenly one day, found them in all my debris.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Carruthers, thank you, because that gets some time frame to things we have talked about. I'd like to talk to you mostly today about when you



came back from France, what you found things like here in Memphis and what you did next and what you did for aviation while you were here. Because I know you have been a leader here in Memphis Aviation through the years.

MR. CARRUTHERS: This is a copy of all the members of the 93rd Squadron up there. It's immaterial to the story except that I wanted you to see my general who was Major Hoffer. I'll put that back in there.

To the best of my recollections is that when I got back from France, due to the fact that Colonel Billy Mitchell was one of the toughest officers in the Navy or head of the Air Service at that time. He was very determined that the Air Forces of United States would be the deciding factors in winning the war. He made no bones about putting the work on us so we could accomplish it. We flew four sorties a day. We started out in the morning at 4:30 and got maybe a small snack for breakfast, and got into the plane and went out on a sortie that lasted about an hour and fifteen to thirty minutes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Wherever your gas tank would take you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and whatever the orders were to do. They varied almost from day to day. Because the whole front was following a pattern of subduing the Germans the fastest way that we could.

DR. CRAWFORD: Everyone was advancing then.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Right. So the preliminary was all groundwork. General Mitchell put four bombs on a pursuit



plane which was just like adding another 100 pounds to your weight of your plane.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did the bombs weight each?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Twenty pounds.

DR. CRAWFORD: Like the one you have?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Like the one I have. That was one of them

that I brought back with me. Now, in the early days we were strafing trenches. The next week we might be strafing troops retreating from the front. The next week might be the bombing of a little city somewhere. Or it may be supporting our own bombers during heavy bombing work back nearest to Germany.

DR. CRAWFORD: Protecting them from German fighters.

MR. CARRUTHERS: From German fighters. We succeeded in being of such superiority that the Old Baron Squadrons soon were disintegrated and shot to pieces.

DR. CRAWFORD: Baron Richthofen's squadron?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. It was the most dangerous one on the front. They flew from one end of the front to the other and were accurate fighters and they could shoot you down without a hesitation.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they flying Fokkers then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Mostly Fokkers, yes, the most improved model that they had.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did it compare with the Spad?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, there were certain differences. They could climb a little better. They could hang





on a prop a little better and keep shooting you, but they couldn't dive as fast as we did.

DR. CRAWFORD: Then you could dive and get away.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yeah. They couldn't create the

maneuverability that we had. When we got into a problem why we were capable of making sharp turns out of the way and joining a fellow in trouble and coming to his help and if we thought it was needed and it was so superior a plane that it could take all the gaff, and you just never had to have any hesitancy about holding back because of some frailty in the plane. That made it a lot easier to keep going.

DR. CRAWFORD: You didn't feel that way with the first planes did you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, with the early Nieuports [They] were much more delicate where we trained. That probably had to be. Some of the Nieuports 18's which Rickenbacker and the 94th Squadron used at Paris when the Germans started their last drive on Paris, they were there to defend it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Nineteen eighteen?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, right at the turn of the year. They did a magnificent job except that they had some deficiencies in the plane. In the first place, the fabric would pull off. The next place, the gases in these rotary motors would collect underneath the cowl and a little spark would set them on fire. You would have to quit the fight right then and get down as fast as you could or else you



would burn up! Because you had no parachutes! They soon began to feel that that was not the plane though it was the fastest plane. They had equipped it with what they called a monosoupape motor, which instead of having an accelerator on it, worked by cylinders with a little lever that you turned it on one cylinder tat-tat-tat-2nd-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-3-4-and 9. And she has buzzed right on off.

It would scare the life out of the people on the ground because they didn't know what in the h--- was happening. But as a fighter plane it soon showed that it couldn't take the gaff particularly like the Americans could give it. So the Spads became more and more the chief plane. They got in with the society--I've forgotten the name--S-P-A-D was a society and got engineers in there that helped them improve the Spad. We got into 190 horse-power motors, and we had the acceleration to take off and get into the air and we had the ability to dive straight down, at least at 195 miles an hour and not do any harm to it.

Sooner or later our planes proved superior to the fighting planes of Germany. Now some of their bombers and some of their reconnaissance planes were a little bit superior, but we didn't mind that because we had the majority of the others.

DR. CRAWFORD: Fighter planes are what could shoot you down.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Right. So we had a pretty good record of surviving. Coming out for that 4:30(a.m.) sortie if the weather was good, you had breakfast and went back out



about 8:30 to 9 o'clock and come in get lunch and go back out as fast as we could get out and come back and go the fourth time if there was any daylight at all.

DR. CRAWFORD: Weren't you getting awfully tired?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I was so sick of airplanes when I got home that I never did want to get near or in one over here.

DR. CRAWFORD: Didn't last long, did it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, (Laughter). So they started flying around and we started having our Armistice Day Parade and all their boys would get on their uniform and we'd parade down Main Street and Second and then we'd end up at the Peabody Hotel or some other hotel. It was sometimes we had a little place out on Brooks Road.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was that called, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh, it was just somebody's old house. You'd have all the moonshine and good barbecue and things like that. And somebody in the group or in charge of the parade or whatever worked it up to have a good meal and we just had a heck of a good time. It was during those festive days that we said, "Well, we ought to have an Aero Club here, something to push aviation." About that time we formed the Memphis Aero Club. The Aero Club began to get very busy with people [like] Percy McDonald, and Mr. Canada.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember Mr. Canada's first name, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: J. W. Canada, I think, he was quite a lawyer



here.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was he in the law firm of Canada, Russell,  
Turner?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know that one. That's Wildman, Harrold,  
Dixon, and McDonnell now. That's the one  
Boots is in and the one my son is in.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I see. Well, it prospered right along and he  
became quite a flyer and he had one of the  
first passenger ships-- Curtiss, I think. We said we knew  
that aviation would be branching out and air mail was coming  
along and we had to do something to take care of these people  
flying in.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Mr. Carruthers, do you know what year  
the Memphis Aero Club was formed?

MR. CARRUTHERS: If I had that particular story, if I can find  
it, that has the most beautiful data of  
people.

DR. CRAWFORD: Maybe you can get a copy sent to me.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I will get a copy sent to you. I just can't  
figure where I would have put that copy be-  
cause I had my girl to rewrite it two or three times. I'll  
get it from Seale, and have him send you a copy so that you  
can read it over. It tells you the story just as in detail  
and all the fellows that were in it, whose names I know you  
would like to have in your history.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now it was done a few years after World War I,





wasn't it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: From those of you who liked to fly?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Right?

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have a plane then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, no. I wouldn't. During that time the government was selling planes. Through these magazines they were advertised. I had one that was advertised--the Thomas Morse Speed Scout--brand new for \$90.00.

DR. CRAWFORD: Ninety dollars!

MR. CARRUTHERS: Ninety dollars I bought it!

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, was that the one you bought in California?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, that is the one I got out there.

DR. CRAWFORD: This Speed Scout was made in America, but did not get in service in the war?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, they didn't get them over in time. We kept on flying the Spads because they were superior. They used them mostly in training here.

DR. CRAWFORD: How do you think they compared with the Spad?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I never flew one, and I don't know. I've had some people say they didn't compare and I've had others to say that they were equally as good. Service is the thing that tells you what they can do and I didn't have any.

I finally sold it because I couldn't borrow enough money to get it to go out to put it together. If I could have put it



together, then there weren't enough air fields to fly it back to Memphis.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was soon after the war that you bought that one?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had it shipped back to Memphis, but could not put it back together.

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, I never did get it shipped to Memphis. I sold it before it left Long Beach, California for \$120.00.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you made a profit. (laughter)

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know what happened to it from that on. I don't even know if they have one in the museum at Dayton or not. But they've got every kind that we flew.

DR. CRAWFORD: You bought that right after the war, but did not get to bring it back. You would not have had a place to use it if you did.

MR. CARRUTHERS: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know where the first airport was and when it appeared in Memphis, Mr. Carruthers?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, I may have told you before that a bunch of us went to Mayor Rowlett Paine's office. He says, "Well, what do you boys want?

We said, "We want to talk to you, Mayor.

He says, "All right, come on back in the room." and he has a bunch of chairs all around and he was a politician. We



all sat down and he said, "What can I do for you?"

We said, "Mayor, we feel like Memphis has got to have an airport."

Mayor said, "An airport! What do we need with an airport for?" We told him and he got so amused at our enthusiasm that he started laughing. (Laughter) "It's a funny thing and you boys don't know it, but aviation will never amount to a d---."

We were so disappointed we didn't know what to do. So we went on back and we had our meetings and we said, "Well, there's going to be an election in the next three months and we have got to get a man to run who will promise us an airport." It turned out that was Watkins Overton. Watkins Overton said, "Yes, you help me get elected and I'll see that you get one."

So after he was elected he got up a little money for us and we either rented a piece of property out near Woodstock, Tennessee for a small amount of money and cleared off a few of the trees and there was an old barn on the property. We took Vernon and Phoebe Omlie out there and showed it to them and said, "This is going to be an airport. "How about you two running it?"

They said, "Yeah, we'll do it."

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you name it, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: What did we name it? Armstrong Field.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, that is near Woodstock and that is where we are going to dedicate the marker October 3,



1987 to commemorate Lindburgh's arrival and the historic airfield.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. I went out there with Tom Seale not so very long ago and we went all over it and tried to pinpoint it and finally did. I think the Grace Company is on part of the property and has been for a long long while. He is going to get a marker for it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, I am chairman of the commission that is getting the marker.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh, well good for you then.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'll be there with you on October 5th, Mr. Carruthers. Why did you name it Armstrong Field?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Because we had two Armstrong boys--brothers-- that were in the service. One of them was Estes Armstrong who was quite a good pilot and at one time at Issoudun. The Secretary of War, Baker, came over to see the field.

DR. CRAWFORD: Newton Baker?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and while he was there a few of the boys were out flying and demonstrating what was their planes. Estes was one of them. He did some sort of a stunt and he didn't come out of it. He crash landed and I know I was in the hospital with the flu or something when they brought him in. I never saw a man so mangled in all my life. Just to look at him when they took him out of the plane and brought him into the hospital.





DR. CRAWFORD: Badly mangled in the crash?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and they finally got to him and the surgeons did a great job but he had to walk with sort of a bow leg and carry a cane. He did not get to the front but Guion did. He and an artillery shell connected in the air.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was a rare thing.

MR. CARRUTHERS: A very rare thing for it to happen. He died on the front. So we thought we would commemorate his memory by naming it Armstrong Field. It lasted I don't know maybe two years and we had the National Air Tour and we had Vandenberg and two or three other prominent [ones]. I think during one of the selling of bonds some of the Spad groups came down and flew around town to create publicity for it. Then during that time, [there was] a man named Chambers who ran the Bry's Store.

DR. CRAWFORD: I remember Brys.

MR. CARRUTHERS: He was an aviation enthusiast. He built the little airport out here on Jackson Avenue and Warford.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, what was that one named, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Brys Field?

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they close Armstrong Field then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: They sort of abandoned it.

My wife has been patiently putting that thing



together.

DR. CRAWFORD: She has beautiful handwriting.

MR. CARRUTHERS: That lady was Judge Boyd's wife. She died  
just about a month ago.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Boots Boyd's mother?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now you were elected president of the Memphis  
Aero Club at one time, but I don't see a date  
on this newspaper, sir? Maybe 1917? Would that seem right?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't remember particularly.

DR. CRAWFORD: No, I think that date would be wrong because  
that is a previous date in another clipping  
years later. Yes, you are older too.

I am looking at some photographs, Mr. Carruthers, of  
Charles Lindburgh's trip here in October, 1927. This is the  
paper, The Commercial Appeal October 4, 1927, and he was  
here--arrived the previous day--I believe, the 3rd.

MR. CARRUTHERS: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was on a Monday, the third was. I believe  
he autographed a photo for you, didn't he?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, he certainly did.

(a pause in the tape)

It was dedicated on June 14, 1979. Invocation was by  
Rev. Jerry W. Massey of the Kensington Baptist Church.  
Everett Cook made the welcome and Wyeth Chandler was intro-  
ducing the political people. Mayor William M. Morris was  
there.



DR. CRAWFORD: That was fairly recent?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Nineteen seventy-nine. Introduction of Louis Carruthers, honorary chairman, Memphis/Shelby County Airport Authority. Room open to the public.









THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS AN ORAL HISTORY OF AVIATION IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE." THE DATE IS AUGUST 4, 1987. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. LOUIS CARRUTHERS. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS. INTERVIEW IV.

MR. CARRUTHERS: All this has to do with the airport. [Reading from newspapers]. "Airport to seek port authority status, longer hike Airport plans studied."

DR. CRAWFORD: I think we have that date now, Mr. Carruthers.

Can you tell what Armstrong Field looked like? Did you have only one barn there?

MR. CARRUTHERS: It was just a great big farm out in the country.

DR. CRAWFORD: You didn't have anything like paved runways then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: None whatever. We just had a tractor come over and cut the grass.

DR. CRAWFORD: I guess you didn't even pack the ground, did you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, we packed the ground and did some rolling over it with the bulldozer and tried to get it down nice and smooth. For the planes of those days, that was a pretty good place to go.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were designed to land on dirt airstrips,



weren't they?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, no, they were designed to land on anything, I think. Because we didn't have the airport fields around the country at that time.

DR. CRAWFORD: They had to land where they could, then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: That's right. Any good field was enough for them.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you start seeing paved airstrips?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, we had the first paved asphalt airstrips on the municipal air field on the north side of Winchester.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. We had the east/west and the north/south too. The Federal Express and the National Guard have their operations. Most of them have moved further south and have a concrete now where they used to have asphalt. Then when we built the present airport, I was surprised when we asked how thick the aprons had to be out there, they said, "About fourteen inches thick of concrete."

DR. CRAWFORD: That's a lot of concrete!

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, it is! And we are tearing a lot of it up right now.

DR. CRAWFORD: You mean the planes are that heavy?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, we are tearing it up to make it bigger.

DR. CRAWFORD: Are they making it thicker than fourteen inches now?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I think in some vital places they have to.



DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Carruthers, what about the problem of landing in mud? I know it rained a reasonable amount here. Were there some days you just simply couldn't land or take off?

MR. CARRUTHERS: If you are local person you wouldn't have started. Just like in France when the weather was bad, we couldn't do a thing. We stayed in the barracks and tell stories, play cards and drink. (Chuckle) But it didn't take long to learn how to pave them or rock them or do several things. They had a rock they used to use--a gravel type but it got so it would throw the rocks up into the propeller and chip them all to pieces.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that crushed rock?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know, but I think it was just gravel that came right out of the ground and packed in with sand and other things, but it soon got loose during a quick swerve.

DR. CRAWFORD: At that time you always painted a name on a barn or something so it could be read from the air, didn't you.

MR. CARRUTHERS: So it could be visible was the place to put it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have any kind of hanger at Armstrong Field?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Hanger?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Not big enough for real work. They could take



one plane and put it in there and maybe half of it sticking out and do work on the motor or work on the tail-end of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was all.

MR. CARRUTHERS: And that was all. We didn't have anything.

We had one hanger at Brys' Airport.

DR. CRAWFORD: Just one?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. You can go out there to Brys' now and

walk on that field and you can see the old concrete we had just in front of the hanger we had.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know that.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Oh, it is still there, I think.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were your runways or aprons ever paved at

Brys?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, never were.

DR. CRAWFORD: Just in front of the hanger. How large was

that hanger? Was it large enough to get a plane it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: You could get two planes in it. One going this way and the other backed or pulled in.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you did not get to fly the Morris Speed Scout. Did you get a plane after that?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No. Never did. I got to thinking very seriously about it and as they became more

sophisticated, I realized that you had to make flying a vocation and not an avocation. Otherwise, it would be just like playing golf on Sundays and Saturdays or playing tennis





or whatever. You could do fairly good, but you couldn't be the best at it. When all the commercial instructions and radio came into action, well you had to fly certain heights and certain ways and all and it got too d--- big to learn by week-end flying. I just said that is not my speed. I'll be on the Airport Authority and I'll do what I can to feature airflight, but I think it ought to be an airline set up specifically for that purpose.

DR. CRAWFORD: You promoted aviation in Memphis then after your flying days were over.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, I did very much so. That was my civic contribution.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was the first mayor who appointed you to the Airport Commission, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: It might have been Orgill, I'm not sure. I think it is in the book there.

DR. CRAWFORD: What men served with you on there?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, there was Harry O'Hara, serving under Harry Baker, who was the president of the airport then. Dick Tripeer Sr. came on later. We had William Farris was there at one time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was Everett Cook on it?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, Everett Cook was never on the Board, but his son, Ned, succeeded me.

DR. CRAWFORD: As Chairman?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, but Everett never was. He was at that time very heavy with the National Guard



because he offered me the job of running the National Guard here. I turned it down because I had too many business interests and I just couldn't take the time off

DR. CRAWFORD: You did accept a captain's commission though, I believe in 19 . . .

MR. CARRUTHERS: That's when they moved the whole squadron down here from Nashville. I've forgotten what the number of the squadron was, but Bob Haverty was the principal man in that. He became the major of the squadron and several other men became officers in it. I think my record book showed where the certain appointments were in the National Guard. I don't remember who all was on it now.

DR. CRAWFORD: What duties did you have in the Guard, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, we were to establish a place for the aero squadron of the National Guard and to promote safety, and aviation for the state of Tennessee and to see that there were airports successfully built between here and Nashville the headquarters. That they had ample opportunity to carry on a series of protections or whatever nature the National Guard would be called on to do. It soon became so secondary and so mixed up with the commercial that the Governor finally abandoned it and took it back.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you ever have airplanes? Did the National Guard have its own airplanes?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, we had, I've forgotten what model they were, but we had about three or four.

DR. CRAWFORD: You flew on some of them, I suppose?



MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, but not flying them. I flew with the pilots who knew how to fly those things. They were a little heavier type of plane. Some of them were ex-army planes they passed down to the National Guard.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, the Guard usually got equipment after the army had used it awhile. Were they biplanes?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, it wasn't anything much other than biplanes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they all metal then?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Not yet, huh?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Not yet, I don't think.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the mail service in Memphis? Do you remember when that started sir? The air mail?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, but it is in my book when we welcomed the first air mail. I think it is in the historical room and the name of the people who came in. It didn't become something that Memphis seemed to take to or want very much. We had a little post office in the first building out there very very lightly used. When we got ready for the other one, we decided we wouldn't put it in the main building but a separate building out there which we did.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, let's see. They started daily passenger service on April 27, 1930.

MR. CARRUTHERS: On the Chicago and Southern?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir. And it was on the St. Louis and New



Orleans route of the Robertson Air Plane Service Company of St. Louis.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. When they got to including St. Louis, I flew the first Robertson plane up there.

DR. CRAWFORD: To St. Louis?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what they called the airport there?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, I don't think it was the same one that they have now. It wasn't in the same location. Because I went up as part of the airport board to see that field when it was being developed because we wanted to get all the ideas we could for our own airport. We think we outsmarted them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Ours seems better.

MR. CARRUTHERS: We hit it right at the jet age and anything was on the second level so that planes didn't have to use the stairways coming up and walk down and all that sort of thing.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, if you had built it a little earlier it wouldn't have been quite as good.

MR. CARRUTHERS: No. We would have failed at something. But I remember taking the plans down and showing them to Mayor Loeb.

DR. CRAWFORD: Henry Loeb?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Henry Loeb. And he looked them over and he said, "You boys think we got a lot of money,





don't you?" He said, "Why don't you build one big warehouse? And we could keep on adding to it in any direction we want to go."

And we told him all the things that were against that. That you couldn't do it because you had to have a separate gateway for the planes coming up and you could use two sides of anything and if you had them too far away for the people it would be too far to travel and all that. We had more excuses than you can think of. So he finally said, "Well, there are two things I don't see any sense to. I don't see why you have to have the front doors of this new air conditioning with the doors open."

You know how they have it out at Central Hardware? The doors don't open and close. It is just coming out of the [open] door. He said, "That is too expensive and too wasteful." We corrected that.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had studies, I suppose to deal with that?

MR. CARRUTHERS: What?

DR. CRAWFORD: Someone had done studies, I suppose, about the cost of that?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, yes they had. We had so many places we would have to expose, you know. It wasn't going to be any one or two gates that you would come into, it would be several just like now. You have three of them right across the front--three of them going in and three of them going out. We need more too.

Did you ever hear about the tunnel that we have out



there?

DR. CRAWFORD: I have been through it. It's a big help.

Were you on the Board when that was planned.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. We thought that we would have taken in all of Oakhaven out there--subdivision to the east, you know.

DR. CRAWFORD: How much, sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS: All of Oakhaven--residential part.

DR. CRAWFORD: All of Oakhaven, yes.

MR. CARRUTHERS: And have put the tunnel under the main runway and under the other things that we have to have. We put the line with the most traffic in a satellite position till you come into the main terminal, buy your seat, and go down in the tunnel, get on a conveyance either a truck or whatever--electric train or whatever we decided to have--and go under the taxiways and the strip and go over there and get on Delta or would be Northwest today and take off. But we figured out that we could keep on putting more gateways on the present field that we have by shifting things around and that is what we are going to do for awhile.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you think it will grow past that point where they will have to build more?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't know. I can't envision it. It looks like we are moving the population as it is, and you can't say that it won't, but you can't spend the taxpayer's money to that extent without having some basic proof of it.



Atlanta did that theory. You get on in a car and you go automatically around to wherever it is and the gates tell you where you are going and you get off and go into a satel station. Now, there have been a lot of protests that we think that the system that they have in Atlanta is maybe some of the reason that they are losing some of their main trade.

DR. CRAWFORD: It might be.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: I don't like going through the Atlanta airport.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, you just simply had to go through to go anywhere else. I remember we took a trip up to Columbia, South Carolina to a friend of mine--an army man who was going to retire--and we went there and then we wanted to go on up to Chapel Hill and Durham and all which was, oh, one hundred and ten or twenty miles. They said well, fly back to Atlanta and get another plane and it comes out to there.

So I got peeved at it and I called up, I forget what it was, Delta or American or something, and told him there we were only an hour from where we want to go and you got to use up five hours to come back to Atlanta for no good reason. He said, "Well go on and I'll see that you get it." They told us up there that they cancelled the rest of our trip, but he fixed it up and we made it. We drove up there and left the car and came back straight home--we had to come back through Atlanta. But now you can go from here to Durham or Raleigh and other places up there with ease. Then they got the



commuters that will run you back down to Columbia or wherever you want to go.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Carruthers, what has surprised you most about the developments in aviation since your flying days.

MR. CARRUTHERS: It's been very thrilling and very rewarding, I'd say, because I have loved it and I just haven't kept books as well as I would like to, but it doesn't make a whole lot of difference to me whether I leave a book like that Presley or not so I have done my duty and helped to promote it for Memphis and make it easier.

DR. CRAWFORD: You certainly have done that sir. Were you surprised by the invention of jet planes?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes. I knew that there had to be an improvement and there has still got to be one.

Somebody will come out with one of those jet motors that will not make as much noise. We've done everything else and improved the factors and given more stability to the planes and they are big bodied and all that. There's no reason why those motors can't be cut down. Now, I'm not mechanical enough to say I know why, (laughter) but I know it is very much of a challenge.

We were in St Louis here to the division convention back in June. Have you ever been to St. Louis since they remodeled that old Union Station?

DR. CRAWFORD: No, sir, but I have been in the old one.

MR. CARRUTHERS: I tell you, it is a marvel. When you see what





they have done there, you . . . I had an invitation out to the McDonald place and I couldn't go because on that morning Mrs. Boyd died and we had to get back for the funeral because she was a sister-in-law of mine. I wrote to them later and told them that the only thing they needed to do was concentrate on--they don't always make the motors, you know--they build the plane and they use Platt/Whitney, United Tech or something else and those fellows are the ones that have to study this motor business out. There must be a muffler of some sort or a quieter way to explode. They can do it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Considering what they have done, I don't see why they couldn't at least improve it.

MR. CARRUTHERS: It will be done some day. I am going to call Seale right now. Here is an enduring hero story. I don't know whether you want to take it and read it or what.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'd like to see it, sir. This is not from Memphis. It is from the Durham, N. C. Morning Herald, May 21, 1987. It talks about "Lindburgh An Enduring Hero". It talks about Lindburgh's modesty. You met him, Mr. Carruthers, didn't you?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, in this book.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was he like when you met him, Mr. Carruthers?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, I just met him the day he got out of a plane there and there were plenty of people



right after it. This is a little bit of a story of the Lindburgh arrival here.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, that would have been 1927. It is from The Commercial Appeal, October 4, and here is a program of the meeting at the Hotel Peabody to honor him.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Aren't you going to smile at that [cartoon drawing]?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, and that is an old one. Who did that?

MR. CARRUTHERS: It might have been Alley, I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I think it was before Alley's time, sir.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Is it? It might have been.

DR. CRAWFORD: It looks like maybe the name, Jean Price, it's a cartoon. Yes, this is of the meeting at the Peabody?

MR. CARRUTHERS: And you were in that audience.?

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, I was there.

DR. CRAWFORD: W. Percy McDonald is toastmaster and, yes, you gave the introduction and spoke. You introduced Colonel Charles A. Lindburgh at the Peabody when this program was given in his honor at his arrival in Memphis October 3, 1927! He flew in and you took him to the Peabody for the dinner. Rowlett Paine was still Mayor.

MR. CARRUTHERS: He was just besieged by people who wanted to meet him. And the day I introduced him I said, "Colonel Lindburgh, tell me what would be your estimation of what time it would take to fly in the future from Memphis to Little Rock, Arkansas."

He said, "I think that is about so many miles. (I've



forgotten just what he said.) "But you ought to be able to do that in an hour and a half." It's fifteen minutes now!

(laughter) But even then you see, he was as short as some of the things he thought could be accomplished as I am. Because I never thought that we could do the things that we are doing with a plane today.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, they did say in The Commercial Appeal that a very large crowd turned out.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Here is the old Rowlett "Sugar" Paine.

DR. CRAWFORD: The one who didn't want an airport!

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes! Walking with him (Lindburgh).

DR. CRAWFORD: He was willing to walk with Lindburgh when he came.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, he took the pleasure to do it.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's when you got into Watkins Overton soon afterward. Here in 1929 is a map of the Memphis airport. Now let me look at this.

MR. CARRUTHERS: All right. Now, you see this is . . .

DR. CRAWFORD: This is Winchester and old Hollyford Road which comes in from the north, Brooks Avenue touches the airport coming in from the west and then Winchester Pike goes south of the airport.

MR. CARRUTHERS: But it continued then later, you know, and went on through and has been expanded and expanded from one end to the other. Now, this is a Memphis airport and that is where the filling station was.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, at the southeast corner.



MR. CARRUTHERS:Uh-huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: I am looking at this 1929 map at this time.

The city passed what is now Airways and did not extend south of what is now Park Avenue.

MR. CARRUTHERS:That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Ended at the south at Park. It did go out east, as far as there was development, as far as Bartlett and White Station Road.

MR. CARRUTHERS:Uh-huh and it was going all the way out to Germantown now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, it has grown out so much. Of course, the airport has expanded in various directions and mostly south I guess from there.

MR. CARRUTHERS:Then we later came over and came in this particular area.

DR. CRAWFORD: But that was where it was then? Now, the Memphis airport dedication was June 14, 15, 1929 under Memphis Chamber of Commerce and Memphis Airport Commission. You went on the commission later than that, didn't you sir?

MR. CARRUTHERS:I don't remember. I didn't go on at first.

DR. CRAWFORD: Incidentally, whatever happened to Park Field in Millington that was used?

MR. CARRUTHERS:Well, it is still a part of the Navy's stuff now.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was taken in there. [That may have fallen off the table.] Was that the only time that





you met Lindburgh in 1927?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I think so, but I believe that I saw him at some of the National Air Races later on and we had a dinner party for him there at some place--St. Louis or Chicago or what I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were the Omlies managing Armstrong Field when he came?

MR. CARRUTHERS: I don't remember whether they were or not. I don't think so because I believe it would have passed on. Who is this here? (Looking at scrap book) It looks like Everett Cook upside down. Captain John K. Speed, yes, he was a Memphian.

DR. CRAWFORD: M. Cavin Carter, that is 1944.

MR. CARRUTHERS: The Carters were very well-known family here.

Here is about "City Post to Go To Two Businessmen--Halle and Carruthers."

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see. You were named to the Board of Trustees of Oakville Sanitorium. That would have been 1954, I believe, Mr. Carruthers.

MR. CARRUTHERS: This is about my father's shoe business here. What does that say.?

DR. CRAWFORD: "Shoe Firm--Days Here Are Outlined." The night desk, Paul Coppock wrote that.

MR. CARRUTHERS: "Airport Plan attacked."

DR. CRAWFORD: That is 1957 and some citizens were complaining about the airport expansion.

MR. CARRUTHERS: O' Dillon was the man at the courthouse that



was in charge of it. This is when we went to Mayor Loeb and went to talk to him about the airport.

DR. CRAWFORD: He had doubts about spending so much money.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Here is a resolution in the General Assembly of the state of Tennessee--joint resolution by Martin (I assume Brad Martin) to honor Louis Carruthers.

MR. CARRUTHERS: That was a very nice testimonial for me. It has got two or three pages to it. I enjoyed it so much. Then this is the Purple Heart deal and so forth in here. This is a young fellow that got it for me.

DR. CRAWFORD: This is last November 1986, when you finally received your overdue Purple Heart. (Chuckle)

MR. CARRUTHERS: All this stuff, look at that old plane.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was before your time even, Mr. Carruthers

MR. CARRUTHERS: Trying to get all of it in some way.

DR. CRAWFORD: You have a fine scrapbook and I hope you get everything organized the way you want it.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Let's see what I have got in here. Memphis famous visitors--Charles Lindburgh ate at Jackson the next day. So I have to get that all in the book.

DR. CRAWFORD: You've gotten that organized a lot Mr. Carruthers.

MR. CARRUTHERS: This man here has got a museum in Denver, Colorado. He has some of the German and British aces and he has got their uniforms on mannequins. This is a beautiful deal. Because of his interest in



aviation, particularly with the Air Force Academy down at Colorado Springs, he is near there at Denver. He is going to be the curator or head of the thing down there. This is his foundation.

DR. CRAWFORD: The Lafayette Foundation.

MR. CARRUTHERS: He is telling me about these.

DR. CRAWFORD: Parker, Colorado. That is near the Air Force Academy, I gather ?

MR. CARRUTHERS: No, Parker is near Denver. It is just out of Denver like Germantown. But it is going to be on the Air Force property. It is going to be one that is sort of southern that we don't have to go all the way north to see. I've agreed to send all my memorabilia down there as he shows here.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it will be important that it will be preserved, Mr. Carruthers.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, I think so. My kids don't seem to know what to do with it except to just leave it in the office and show it to people. Well, that isn't what I want it for.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, if they do not want your papers out there--your scrapbooks and things, I assume the library here would like to have them.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, I've got a whale of a lot of stuff back there still in boxes that I haven't gotten out.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, I know the library staff, and I think



they would like to have this--the part of your work in Memphis history.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Do you think there is anything that the University over there would like to have?

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Carruthers, let me check. What they are interested in is papers--generally not museum things--not the kind of things to display, but records. But I will be glad to check with them about it, because you have been a leader in Memphis aviation all the way through since there has been any Memphis aviation.

MR. CARRUTHERS: Well, it just came natural.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was your interest.

MR. CARRUTHERS: It was very natural to want to do it. Now, I wish I had more time to really to devote to it but I have had to run a business and have a family.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know that takes time and I have appreciated your taking time to meet with me today. We are going to type up this information and give you a copy.





